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College English is published monthly from October to May at the University of Chicago Press, 5750 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Subscription price, \$4.00 per year, single copies, 55 cents; in Canada, \$4.35; in other countries in the Postal Union, \$4.60. *College English* and the *English Journal*, to one address, \$6.00; in Canada, \$6.70; in other countries in the Postal Union, \$7.20. Subscribers are requested to make all remittances in United States currency or its equivalent by postal or express money order or bank draft.

Correspondence from libraries, agents, and dealers should be addressed to the University of Chicago Press. Communications to the Editor or to the Advertising Manager should be sent to *College English*, 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago 21, Illinois.

Notice to subscribers: If you change your address, please notify us and your local postmaster immediately. The post office does not forward second-class mail.

Entered as second-class matter September 26, 1930, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Volume 13

MARCH 1952

Number 6

Rumer Godden, Public Symbolist

WILLIAM YORK TINDALL¹

THAT excellent moving picture *The River* is faithful on the whole to the novel from which it springs. A little swollen perhaps but almost as colorful and limpid as its source, Jean Renoir's movie resembles Rumer Godden's novel even more in having received the patronage of a large general audience as well as the applause of critics. To please the discriminating and the indiscriminating alike and to hold them to their seats is uncommon in a day when to be good often brings a kind of privacy and to be popular means being obvious and thin. T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party*, at once private and public, occupies a place somewhat higher to be sure but not altogether unlike that of *The River*. To explain the appeal of Eliot's play is hard and far from my purpose, but it is easy enough to fix the pleasure we find in *The River* and in the novels which preceded and followed it.

An Anglo-Indian, Rumer Godden is as much at home in England, where she lives now, as in India, where she was brought up. Of her Indian novels, *The River* (1946) is both representative and outstanding. This work, founded closely

upon her own experience, is one of the most delicate and certainly the most exotic of the novels of adolescence which have abounded since Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*. In each of these fictive autobiographies the young hero, always conspicuous for sensibility, intelligence, and capacity for error, wins from a struggle with life the maturity he deserves and a kind of wisdom. We like their stories because, whatever our maturity and wisdom, we find there the curve of our own development, and, flattered by a sensibility that seems no greater than ours, or pleased by errors more grievous than those we confess to, we rejoice in the enlargement of our understanding.

Harriet, the heroine of *The River*, comes to awareness at the age of twelve or thereabouts. A big house in a garden near the jute works on a river full of crocodiles and porpoises is the place of this expansion. An error in responsibility, her failure to report a cobra in the garden, causes not only the death of her little brother, whose failing is poking serpents with sticks, but her guilt. A convalescent veteran consoles her, however, as she flies her kite or walks on the bank

¹ Columbia University; author of *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1946*.

of the river; the publication of her story (for she is a poet) reassures her; her pregnant mother's lecture on the facts of life informs her; and Harriet is ready to encounter adult reality. We die, fly kites, make poems and babies, she reflects as she welcomes her part in the process of death and creation.

Her development is conveyed to us not only by the usual techniques of narrative but also, as in *A Portrait of the Artist*, by symbols which expand the meanings of the literal level and sometimes carry them. A symbol is the concrete embodiment of a meaning that is too ineffable to convey by statement or analysis. Concealing and revealing at once, as Carlyle says, the symbol suggests both the nature and the quality of a state or an experience. It presents immediately to our understanding and feeling what cannot be said. Since Rumer Godden works on us through such images and since the movies are imagistic, her quality and meanings can be recaptured on film without much loss in the translation from word to picture by a director who like Jean Renoir is sensitive to her method.

Her river, certainly more than a river, suggests the greater part of what she meant. While adolescent Harriet stands with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet, Rumer Godden makes the most of a traditional symbol—as Longfellow, Eliot, and Tennyson had done before her. Even at the beginning of the story Harriet knows that like life itself the river "goes on, goes on." Later, sitting on her favorite wharf and thinking of growing from a little girl to a big one, she says of her river: "It comes from a source far away. . . . It is going to something bigger than itself. . . . Nothing stops days or rivers." And at the end of the book, when, no longer reluctant, she accepts her destiny, "the water ran

calmly in the river." We must agree that this recurrent image means life, death, and time. But beyond these definite meanings, gaining overtones from elaboration and context, the river bears indefinite suggestions that could come from no other image and certainly not from such abstractions as the words "life," "death," and "time." It is by embodying ideas that an artist moves us and gives us knowledge or what Harriet calls "glimpses of birth and death." "Man can embody truth," says Yeats, "but he cannot know it."

The river does not do this work of embodiment alone. Other images, surrounding and supporting the central river, carry meanings of their own and by a kind of harmony among themselves and with the river create a composite meaning that is richer and more complex than a single image could contain or communicate. Of this organization of supporting images the garden is easily the first in importance.

This apparently harmless inclosure, with its wall, its birds, flowers, and tree, seems to promise all the safety that infancy demands. The significant progress of Harriet's story is from this static inclosure of childhood to the dynamic flow of life and death. But far from being so innocent as it first appears, the garden is not unlike that of Adam and Eve. Like theirs, it contains a tree, leaves in air, roots in earth, which seems to be the pole of the world. This tree of life or knowledge, which is Harriet's other obsession, is even more ambiguous than the river. Clearly benign, its shade conceals a serpent. Whether this beast represents evil, death, or male intrusion and whether that garden is the unconscious mind of a child remain unclear; for Rumer Godden is not composing an allegory or a system of equations but organizing a harmony of

suggestions. Confronted by these complexities, all we know for sure is that the river runs, the garden is, and that life, at once simple and complex, embraces the extremes of becoming and being.

It is plain, however, that although these images and others, such as the kite and the ball of tinfoil from which Harriet creates a world, are unassigned in the sense that part of their meaning is indefinite and beyond explanation, they are nonetheless far more explicable than those, for example, of *Moby-Dick*. Scholars tease themselves, in spite of Melville's discourse on whiteness, with trying to find the meaning of *Moby-Dick*, but their endeavor is vain. Like any true symbol, that whale evades discourse, and we must be content to apprehend him directly as a mystic his god without hope of spreading the news. We feel Miss Godden's garden and her river, but we almost explain them away.

However different in degree, both Melville and Miss Godden belong to the great symbolist movement of our time. Impatient with the world of fact and utility, many of the greater writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries replaced statement, analysis, and description, the ways of scientists and practical men, with suggestion by rhythm, sound, and image. Not reason but imagination, the creative, image-making power, gave them their way of knowing. Blake, Baudelaire, and Yeats were of this imaginative kind; and novelists such as Joyce, Mann, Kafka, and Lawrence made arrangements in their turn of suggestive images. Since they adopted the method of poets, these novelists might be called not only symbolist but poetic. Rumer Godden is poetic, as every book reviewer has observed. But her poetry is less a matter of the melodious style they have noticed than of the images and har-

monies of part with part that assure her a place in this romantic tradition.

Not all of Rumer Godden's novels are symbolist—or indeed poetic. Only the better ones are, and even among these there is a wide variety of method; for, fully aware of the tradition, she experimented with the technical discoveries and the themes of her immediate predecessors, Virginia Woolf, for example, and Katherine Mansfield. Among the Indian novels of Rumer Godden, two display the happy welding of thefts into new wholes of thought and feeling that T. S. Eliot commends. Of these, *Black Narcissus* (1938) is earlier and better; but, since *Breakfast with the Nikolides* (1941) is a first study for *The River*, let us take that next.

The neighborhood of this breakfast is also a garden of sorts, an agricultural station, on a river in Bengal. River and farm are symbolic, but unaware as yet of the possibilities of these images, Miss Godden failed to make them contain and present her theme, which, like that of most of her books, is the coming to maturity of a girl and her adjustment to reality. Emily, like Harriet, is about twelve years old. The maladjustment of her parents increases her own. How her parents are reconciled and how she finally accepts them and the world constitute the plot. It is notable that both Emily and Harriet pass from early adolescence to maturity without all those years of bother and anxiety.

Emily's dog is the agent of this fortunate transformation. Like the serpent in the garden, this beast is dangerous; for he is mad. In the beginning he runs in the dark, and at the end his ghost is laid by ceremonial light; but, although supported by symbols, he is less symbol than structural center. Even Emily's Joycean paradigm, proceeding from dog to uni-

verse, fails to increase his significance, and he remains little more than the cause of psychological, social, and domestic reactions. Though the title, a little off-center as many of Miss Godden's titles are, refers to the death of the dog and the commencement of these reactions, it fails to make him more than dog. His failure to emerge must be attributed to an emphasis which, unlike that of *The River*, falls not so much upon such images as upon states of mind. These are presented by interior monologue, somewhat like Virginia Woolf's, and by the parentheses of memory. As Virginia Woolf demonstrates, there is nothing incompatible between the subjective and the symbolic, but at this point of her experiments Rumer Godden chose to emphasize one at the expense of the other.

Black Narcissus, on the other hand, although filled with parenthetical memories, is her most elaborate symbolic structure. It is not surprising that this novel, her first important one and almost her maiden effort, shows debts to her elders and betters for method and theme. She had something of her own to say. But seeing her experience through the eyes of others, she combined elements from such seeming incompatibles as *A Passage to India*, *South Wind*, and *The Magic Mountain*. The parts she took from them, however, she made into a whole that has no more than family resemblance to its origins, and, like any aesthetic organization, presents a new reality. That she found her elements in literary tradition is nothing against her. After all, we have to get what we work with somewhere, and what matters is not so much where we get it as what we do with it. The value of a work of art is not its parts but the relationship among them. It is this harmony that creates what we call vision or radiance.

Black Narcissus is a story about five Anglican nuns of a teaching order who go to establish a nunnery at the foot of the Himalayas near an obtrusive mountain. They are somewhat confused by opposites on their back premises: by a holy man whose unworldliness makes theirs look worldly and by the worldliness of Mr. Dean, the general's nephew, and a voluptuous native girl. Finding it impossible to adapt themselves to the terrible proximity of this mountain and these people, those nuns depart. But each of them has changed. Sister Ruth, for example, goes mad, and Sister Clodagh, the mother superior and our heroine, gets wisdom.

Getting that is a common theme of Rumer Godden's fiction. The coming to maturity of Emily and Harriet in the other Indian novels is not unlike the coming to wisdom of Sister Clodagh, who, although she is of age, has been too self-centered and superior to be called adult. The experience with man and mountain that kills her pride, the worst of sins, presides at the birth of love. Reborn like those adolescents, becoming human, wise, and pious, she discovers charity, the greatest of virtues, and commits herself to the stream.

Finding the wisdom of humanity is a theme of the greatest literature. In *Ulysses* proud young Dedalus, learning his oneness with mankind in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Bloom, surrenders himself at last to the waters of reality, the river Liffey of *Finnegans Wake*. Tolstoi's Russian general in *War and Peace* is victorious because he knows how to flow with the stream. And Huckleberry Finn, floating down a river at once literal and symbolic, learns compassion. Although largeness of theme and magnanimity do not assure literary greatness, they contribute to it or at least are present in it,

and it may be that the highest excellence is impossible without them. It is plain that Rumer Godden does what some of the greatest writers do. But it is also plain that she is not as great as Joyce, Tolstoi, or Mark Twain. Before trying to find out why, let us look at *Black Narcissus* more closely and after that at *Take Three Tenses*. In these two novels, certainly her best, she presents large themes by the methods of the masters.

In the first of these she depends, as we have noticed, upon symbols for her principal effects. Her mountain, unattainable, incomprehensible, remote, is the kind of symbol that Thomas Mann used in *The Magic Mountain*; but it resembles more nearly the distant, masculine, god-like lighthouse of Virginia Woolf and the caves which, reducing all human aspiration, sense and nonsense alike, to an odious echo, give *A Passage to India* both terror and mystery. Tending her closed garden, Sister Phillippa complains that the mountain interrupts: "He's everywhere, before and about and in our house." In his presence, she adds, nothing seems to matter. Associating the mountain with Mr. Dean, Sister Clodagh fits curtains to the chapel window: "The light is far too bright." Only the holy man can look at it; for, as the general remarks, "You have to be strong to live near God or a mountain."

These suggestions of masculinity, remoteness, immensity, and light, even less narrowly assigned than those surrounding the river, are complicated but not defined by the associated images of wind, rain, and tea. As they arrive, the nuns are given tea in slightly rancid wine cups; their convent is at the edge of a plantation of tea presided over by Mr. Dean; and as they depart "Sister Clodagh put the cup back on the tray." This is the last sentence of the book, and, since Miss

Godden makes the most of last sentences, it must have meaning. If tea has the meaning that Joyce gives it in *Ulysses*, from which she may have got the idea, it implies life, worldly reality, or secular communion. Faithful to her vows, Sister Clodagh rejects the world (which is not her dish of tea) while accepting humanity.

Whereas "black narcissus" seems no more than the perfume ignominiously used by the general's nephew, it has connotations that justify its reappearance as title. Sister Phillippa wants jonquils and daffodils for the convent garden. Like that perfume, these flowers of the narcissus family call to mind the mythical Narcissus, who, suggesting both Sister Clodagh's vanity and her rebirth, summarizes in one symbolic allusion the principal theme of the novel. The blackness of this flower implies not only a nun's habit and the unworldliness that threatens rebirth but also the period of trial and deprivation that must precede it. This took a while to figure out.

Almost as ingenious, *Take Three Tenses* (1945) reflects the interest in time and memory that began with Bergson and spread to literature through the work of Proust, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot. One of Miss Godden's epigraphs is from Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which presents intimations of time and eternity by symbols of garden, house, river, and the like. Another of the epigraphs that she uses as clues to her matter and method is from a commentary on the contrapuntal method of Bach: "Two, three or four simultaneous melodies . . . are constantly on the move, each going its own independent way." It is clear from these two epigraphs and the subtitle of the novel that she proposes a "fugue in time" like Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* or the Sirens episode of *Ulysses*. As usual

she confined her exploration of reality to the paths of her predecessors, but she pursued them uncommonly well.

For the matter of her composition she used a family chronicle, slighter but the same in kind as *The Forsyte Saga* or *The Years* by Virginia Woolf. The similarity is hidden, however, by the design. Ignoring the chronological order that even Virginia Woolf preserved, Miss Godden ranges back and forth in time, and, as if the episodes were notes or phrases, arranges them by harmonies or discords in a musical, if not a fugal, pattern. Each person begins or completes a chord. The agreeable result is not a narrative in the accepted sense but a distortion of narrative in the interest of meaning. Past and present, therefore, intricately pursue one another as they do, not in histories, but in our memories.

The house in which the design is centered is a kind of memory. Containing the generations of a family, it unites past and present with the future. Permanent yet the repository of change, it becomes something like Mr. Eliot's significant object, a Chinese jar, for example, in which time and eternity intersect. This enormous structure, absorbing lives and times, gives forth their essence. To do that it must be roundly created, a kind of "world" as one of the characters sees it. Upon the creation of this world, a concrete image for the feeling and idea of timelessness and time, Rumer Godden lavished her considerable art—at the expense of the characters, who, since none is fully created, are little more than ghosts on the backstairs or down the corridors. Even the plane tree in the yard (maybe the family tree) is more palpable than these shades.

As figures in a design and not as individuals, these shades win renewal from frustration, hatred, and despair. The story of their rebirth, if unscrambled as

the movies unscrambled it some years ago, is sentimental, adding little to our insight. Taxing neither reason nor feeling, their story is assured of general appeal. But the house, embodying a deeper vision of our reality, gives the trivial story function and significance. Elevated by this device, it becomes part of a symbolic whole, and Rumer Godden's household music becomes a form for clarifying our knowledge.

Of her subsequent books it is unnecessary to say much. Perhaps the requirements of a ladies' magazine, where most of them first appeared, compelled her to be increasingly obvious. *A Candle for St. Jude* (1948) has nothing to distinguish it from other popular novels. In the evident attempt to combine her earlier richness with the demands of the market she based *A Breath of Air* (1951) on Shakespeare's *Tempest*, using a familiar tale as frame after the manner of Joyce's *Ulysses*. But even her old theme of renewal and a suggestive island failed to bring this confection to life. *In Noah's Ark* (1949), a story in verse, concerns the plight of the poet in society, which, if we judge by the verse, is desperate.

Disregarding these unfortunate things, let us try to see why her better novels, like those of J. P. Marquand and several winners of the Nobel Prize, fall short of the greatness they approximate. It is clear that she lacks the power of creating characters—a serious lack in an art where character is central. The characters of Dickens emerge from the page, but none of Miss Godden's is emergent or memorable. She does better at giving body to inanimate objects or vegetables: rivers, houses, mountains, gardens, and trees. But to be effectual such symbols require relationship with solid characters. *Moby-Dick* would be a minnow without his Ahab.

The word "fiction" means shape or

form; the test of form is what it embodies and shows forth. Her elaborate forms, without creative power behind them, seem inadequate for the extension of reality that we find in great art, Joyce's, for example, or Tolstoi's. Maybe another trouble is having too little vision of her own. Depending upon others not only for method but for insight, she remains a craftsman.

Her forms, however, are uncommonly well adapted for communication. Unlike some of the visionaries who tend to become obscure, she makes a vision clear to the common reader. Her function is translating the visions of major artists for those who could not receive them in the original. She does this by a surface so

pleasing and limpid that it makes the depths immediately apparent. A fitting analogy for this effect is Sir John Denham's seventeenth-century river, at once the Thames and an ideal for public art:

Though deep, yet clear; though gentle yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

Maybe her stream, like Denham's, is too clear. Great art is always mysterious; a great novel requires, invites, and rewards many readings, yet we never get to the bottom of it. Although we can fathom Rumer Godden at first reading or, in the case of that narcissus, at second, the public novel, for which one reading is plenty, has no greater master.

Hawthorne's *Hester*

DARREL ABEL¹

HESTER PRYNNE, the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, typifies romantic individualism, and in her story Hawthorne endeavored to exhibit the inadequacy of such a philosophy. The romantic individualist repudiates the doctrine of a supernatural ethical absolute. He rejects both the authority of God, which sanctions a pietistic ethic, and the authority of society, which sanctions a utilitarian ethic, to affirm the sole authority of Nature. Hester, violating piety and decorum, lived a life of nature and attempted to rationalize her romantic self-indulgence; but, although she broke the laws of God and man, she failed to secure even the natural satisfactions she sought.

Many modern critics, however, who see her as a heroine *à la* George Sand, accept her philosophy and regard her as

the central figure of the romance—the spokesman of Hawthorne's views favoring "a larger liberty." Hawthorne's women are usually more sympathetic and impressive than his men; because Hester is more appealing than either her husband or her lover, it is easy to disregard their more central roles in the story.² Furthermore, the title of the romance is commonly taken to refer mainly to the letter on Hester's dress and thus somehow to designate her as the central figure;

² "Hester Prynne . . . becomes, really, after the first scene, an accessory figure; it is not upon her the denouement depends" (Henry James, *Hawthorne* [New York, 1879], p. 109). James had a virtue excellent and rare among readers: he attended to his author's total intention and exposition. Apparently Hester's modern champions are misled by their prepossessions; they share the general tendency of our time to believe more strongly in the reality and value of natural instincts than in the truth and accessibility of supernatural absolutes.

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but, in fact, the ideal letter, not any particular material manifestation of it, is referred to in the title. Actually its most emphatic particular manifestation is the stigma revealed on Dimmesdale's breast in the climaxing chapter of the book, "The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter."

Hester's apologists unduly emphasize circumstances which seem to make her the engaging central figure of the romance, and they ignore or even decry the larger tendency of the book, which subordinates her and exposes her moral inadequacy. "She is a free spirit liberated in a moral wilderness."³

She has sinned, but the sin leads her straightway to a larger life. . . . Hawthorne . . . lets the sin elaborate itself, so far as Hester's nature is concerned, into nothing but beauty. . . . Since her love for Dimmesdale was the one sincere passion of her life, she obeyed it utterly, though a conventional judgment would have said that she was stepping out of the moral order. There is nothing in the story to suggest condemnation of her or of the minister in their sin. . . . The passion itself, as the two lovers still agree at the close of their hard experience, was sacred and never caused them repentance.⁴

This opinion sublimely disregards Hawthorne's elaborate exposition of the progressive moral dereliction of Hester, during which "all the light and graceful foliage of her character [was] withered up by this red-hot brand" of sinful passion. It even more remarkably ignores her paramour's seven-year-long travail of conscience for (in his own dying words) "the sin here so awfully revealed."

The most recent and immoderate advocate of Hester as the prepossessing exponent of a wider freedom in sexual relations is Professor Frederic I. Carpenter:

³ Stuart P. Sherman, "Hawthorne: A Puritan Critic of Puritans," *Americans* (New York, 1922), p. 148.

⁴ John Erskine, *CHAL*, II, 26-27.

In the last analysis, the greatness of *The Scarlet Letter* lies in the character of Hester Prynne. Because she dared to trust herself to believe in the possibility of a new morality in the new world, she achieved spiritual greatness in spite of her own human weakness, in spite of the prejudices of her Puritan society, . . . in spite of the prejudices of her creator himself.⁵

It is a tribute to Hawthorne's art that Hester's champion believes in her so strongly that he presumes to rebuke her creator for abusing her and rejoices in his conviction that she triumphs over the author's "denigrations."

In fact, Hawthorne does feel moral compassion for Hester, but her role in the story is to demonstrate that persons who engage our moral compassion may nevertheless merit moral censure. We sympathize with Hester at first because of her personal attraction, and our sympathy deepens throughout the story because we see that she is more sinned against than sinning.

The prime offender against her is Roger Chillingworth, who married her before she was mature enough to know the needs of her nature. There is a tincture of Godwinism—even of Fourierism—in Hawthorne's treatment of Hester's breach of her marriage obligations. Godwin held that marriage was "the most odious of all monopolies" and that it was everyone's duty to love the worthiest. After her lapse, Hester told her husband, "Thou knowest I was frank with thee. I felt no love, nor feigned any." According to Godwinian principles, then, her duty to him was slight, especially if a man came along whom she could love. Chillingworth freely acknowledged that he had wronged her in marrying her before she was aware of the needs of her nature: "Mine was the first wrong, when

⁵ "Scarlet A Minus," *College English*, V (January, 1944), 179.

I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay." His second, less heinous, offense was his neglectfully absenting himself from her after their marriage. His experience understood what her innocence could not foresee, that the awakening passion in her might take a forbidden way: "If sages were ever wise in their own behoof, I might have foreseen all this." His third and culminating offense was his lack of charity toward her after her disgrace. Although he admitted his initial culpability in betraying her into "a false and unnatural relation," he refused to share the odium brought upon her in consequence of the situation he had created. True, he plotted no revenge against her, but cold forbearance was not enough. He was motivated not by love but by self-love; in his marriage and in his vengeance he cherished and pursued his private objects, to the exclusion of the claims of others, whose lives were involved with his own. He regarded his wife jealously, as a chattel,⁶ not as a person with needs and rights of her own. Her error touched his compassion only perfunctorily, but it gave a mortal wound to his *amour-propre*. Hester's adulterous passion was nobler, for she wished that she might bear her paramour's shame and anguish as well as her own. Thus Chillingworth triply offended against her: he drew her into a relationship which made her liable to sin, did not duly defend her from the peril in which he had placed her, and cast her off when she succumbed.

The nature of Dimmesdale's offense against Hester is too obvious to require specification, but both Hester's conduct

⁶ "Woman is born for love, and it is impossible to turn her from seeking it. Men should deserve her love as an inheritance, rather than seize and guard it like a prey" (Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* [Boston, 1893], p. 337).

and his own deserve whatever extenuation may be due to the passionate and impulsive errors of inexperience: "This had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose." The minister's conduct toward Hester, then, is less blameworthy than her husband's, who had knowingly and deliberately jeopardized her happiness and moral security; Dimmesdale tells Hester: "We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest!" A distinction must be made, however, between Dimmesdale's moral responsibility and Hester's; her sin was contingent upon his, and her conduct is therefore more deserving of palliation than his. Besides, he had moral defenses and moral duties which she did not have. He had a pastoral duty toward her and a professional duty to lead an exemplary life. Also, according to Hawthorne's view of the distinctive endowments of the sexes, Hester depended upon her womanly feeling, but he had the guidance of masculine intellect and moral erudition. Above all, he was free to marry to satisfy "the strong animal nature" in him, but Hester met her happiest choice too late, when she was "already linked and wedlock bound to a fell adversary." But the minister's really abominable fault was not his fornication; it was his unwillingness to confess his error, his hypocrisy. Hester wished she might bear his shame as well as her own, but he shrank from assuming his place beside her because his perilous pride in his reputation for sanctity was dearer to him than truth. Like Chillingworth, he wronged Hester and left her to bear the punishment alone.

Society wronged Hester as grievously as, though less invidiously than, particular persons wronged her. Hawthorne distinguished between society under its in-

stinctively human aspect and society under its institutional aspect. Society as collective humanity sympathized and was charitable: "It is to the credit of human nature, that, except where its selfishness is brought into play, it loves more readily than it hates." But society under its institutional aspect pursued an abstraction, conceived as the general good, which disposed it vindictively toward errant individuals. Hawthorne remarked in "The New Adam and Eve": "[The] Judgment Seat [is] the very symbol of man's perverted state." A scheme of social justice supplants the essential law of love which is grounded in human hearts; any system of expedient regulations tends to become sacrosanct eventually, so that instead of serving humanity it becomes a tyrannical instrument for coercing nonconformists.

Harsh legalism has been remarked as a characteristic of the Puritan theocracy by social historians: "The effect of inhumane punishments on officials and the popular mind generally . . . [was] apparently] a brutalizing effect . . . , rendering them more callous to human sufferings."⁷ "To make the people good became the supreme task of the churches, and legalism followed as a matter of course."⁸ "The theory was that Jehovah was the primary law-giver, the Bible a statute-book, the ministers and magistrates stewards of the divine will."⁹ Hester, then, Hawthorne tells us, suffered "the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law" in "a period when the forms of authority were felt to possess

the sacredness of Divine institutions." Her punishment shows how society had set aside the humane injunction that men should love one another, to make a religion of the office of vengeance, which in the Scriptures is exclusively appropriated to God. The wild-rose bush, with "its delicate gems," which stood by the prison door, and "the burdock, pigweed, apple-peru, and other such unsightly vegetation" which grew with such appropriate luxuriance in the prison yard symbolize the mingled moral elements in "the dim, awful, mysterious, grotesque, intricate nature of man."¹⁰ Puritan society, unfortunately, had cultivated the weeds and neglected the flowers of human nature and attached more significance to "the black flower of civilized life, a prison," than to the rose bush, "which, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history" "to symbolize some sweet moral blossom." There is powerful irony in Hawthorne's picture of the harsh matrons who crowded around the pillory to demand that Hester be put to death: "Is there not law for it? Truly, there is, both in Scripture and the statute-book." Surely Hawthorne was here mindful of the question which the scribes and Pharisees put to Jesus concerning the woman taken in adultery: "Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" The harshness of this tirade reflects the perversion of womanliness which has been wrought among this "people amongst whom religion and law were almost iden-

⁷ L. T. Merrill, "The Puritan Policeman," *American Sociological Review*, X (December, 1945), 768.

⁸ Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York, 1932), p. 90.

⁹ Merrill, *op. cit.*, p. 766.

¹⁰ Hawthorne remarked, in the *American Notebooks*, that "there is an unmistakable analogy between the wicked weeds and the bad habits and sinful propensities which have overrun the moral world." There is an excellent explication of the symbolism of *The Scarlet Letter* in H. H. Waggoner's "Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Cemetery, the Prison, and the Rose," *University of Kansas City Review*, XIV (spring, 1948), 175-90.

tical." A man in the crowd offered timely reproof to the chider: "Is there no virtue in woman,—save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows?"—a reminder that virtue must be voluntary, an expression of character, and that there is little worth in a virtue that is compulsory, an imposition of society.

The ostracism called too lenient a punishment by the perhaps envious matrons of the town was almost fatal to Hester's sanity and moral sense, for it almost severed "the many ties, that, so long as we breathe the common air . . . , unite us to our kind." "Man had marked this woman's sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself." Even children "too young to comprehend wherefore this woman should be shut out from the sphere of human charities" learned to abhor the woman upon whom society had set the stigma of the moral outcast. The universal duty of "acknowledging brotherhood even with the guiltiest" was abrogated in the treatment of Hester:

In all her intercourse with society, . . . there was nothing which made her feel as if she belonged to it. . . . She was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere, or communicated with the common nature by other organs and senses than the rest of human kind. She stood apart from moral interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt.

The peculiar moral danger to Hester in her isolation was that it gave her too little opportunity for affectionate intercourse with other persons. Hawthorne regarded a woman's essential life as consisting in the right exercise of her emotions. His attitude toward women is that of Victorian liberalism; he looked upon them as equal to men, but differently en-

dowed. To him, the distinctive feminine virtues were those characteristic of ideal wifehood and motherhood: instinctive purity and passionate devotion. His prescription for the happiest regulation of society was "Man's intellect, moderated by Woman's tenderness and moral sense."¹ Dimmesdale's history shows the corruption of the masculine virtues of reason and authority in a sinner who has cut himself off from the divine source of those virtues; Hester's history shows the corruption of the feminine virtues of passion and submission in a sinner who has been thrust out from the human community on which those virtues depend for their reality and function. In this essential feminine attribute, the working of her moral sensibility through her feelings rather than her thought, she bears a strong general resemblance to Milton's Eve (who is, however, more delicately conceived). She is a pure (as Hardy used the term) or very (as Shakespeare would have said) woman: that is, a charmingly real woman whose abundant sexuality, "whatever hypocrites austere talk," was the characteristic and valuable endowment of her sex.

In consequence of her ostracism, Hester's life turned, "in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought"; she "wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind." Reflecting bitterly upon her own experience, she was convinced equally of the injustice and the hopelessness of a woman's position in society:

Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them? As concerned her own

¹ Tennyson wrote in "The Princess" that "woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse," and looked for a happier state of society when there should be "everywhere / Two heads in council, two beside the hearth, / Two in the tangled business of the world." Then, man would "gain in sweetness and in moral height," and woman in "mental breadth."

individual existence, she had long ago decided in the negative. . . . [A woman who considers what reforms are desirable discerns] a hopeless task before her. As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated.

Although Hawthorne to some degree sympathized with Hester's rebellious mood, he did not, as Stuart P. Sherman averred, represent her as "a free spirit liberated in a moral wilderness," but as a human derelict who "wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness." "A woman never overcomes these problems by any exercise of thought," and Hester's teachers—"Shame, Despair, Solitude!"—had "taught her much amiss." Thus, unfitted by her intense femininity for intellectual speculations, as well as by her isolation from the common experience of mankind, which rectifies aberrant thought, she unwomaned herself and deluded herself with mistaken notions.

The pathetic moral interdependence of persons is strikingly illustrated in the relations of Hester, Dimmesdale, and little Pearl. Dimmesdale acceded to Hester's plan of elopement because his will was enfeebled and he needed her resolution and affection to support him, but he was well aware that her proposals would be spiritually fatal to them. He evaded this death of the soul by the grace of God, who granted him in his death hour the strength to confess and deliver himself from the untruth which threatened his spiritual extinction. His dra-

matic escape fortuitously prevented Hester from surrendering her soul to mere nature in flight from her unhappiness. The rescue of her soul is as much a matter of accident as the shipwreck of her happiness had been. It is one of the truest touches of Hawthorne's art that Hester was not reclaimed to piety by the edifying spectacle of Dimmesdale's death in the Lord but that persistent in error, even as he expired in her arms breathing hosannas, she frantically insisted that her sole hope of happiness lay in personal reunion with him—in heaven, if not on earth.

One channel of moral affection in her life, however, had never been clogged—her love for little Pearl. This had sustained her in her long solitude by affording a partial outlet for her emotions, and Hawthorne's rather perfunctory and improbable "Conclusion" informs us that, when she had abated her resentment at being frustrated of worldly happiness, the affection between her and little Pearl drew her into a state of pious resignation and thus served as a means of positive redemption.

In the last analysis, the error for which Hester suffered was her too-obstinate supposition that human beings had a right to happiness. "Hester's tragedy came upon her in consequence of excessive yielding to her own heart."¹² Hawthorne remarked in his notebooks that "happiness in this world, if it comes at all, comes incidentally. Make it the object of pursuit, and it leads us a wild-goose chase, and is never attained." The proper pursuit of man, he thought, was not happiness but a virtuous life; he inherited the Puritan conviction that

the good which God seeks and accomplishes is the display of infinite being, a good which

¹² F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* (New York, 1941), p. 348.

transcends the good of finite existence. If the misery of the sinner is conducive to such a display, which it must be because sinners are in fact miserable, then it is just and good that sinners should be punished with misery.¹³

Although we are expected to love and pity Hester, we are not invited to condone her fault or to construe it as a virtue. More a victim of circumstances than a wilful wrongdoer, she is nevertheless to be held morally responsible. In her story Hawthorne intimates that, tangled as human relationships are and must be, no sin ever issues solely from the intent and deed of the individual sinner, but that it issues instead from a complicated interplay of motives of which he is the more or less willing instrument. Even so, however strong, insidious, and unforeseeable the influences and compulsions which prompted his sin, in any practicable sys-

tem of ethics the sinner must be held individually accountable for it. This is harsh doctrine, but there is no escape from it short of unflinching repudiation of the moral ideas which give man his tragic and lonely dignity in a world in which all things except himself seem insensate and all actions except his own seem mechanical. The Puritans were no more illogical in coupling the assumption of moral determinism with the doctrine of individual responsibility to God than is our own age in conjoining theories of biological and economic determinism with the doctrine of individual responsibility to society. The Puritan escaped from his inconsistency by remarking that God moves in a mysterious way; we justify ours by the plea of expediency. Hawthorne, however, was content merely to pose the problem forcibly in the history of Hester Prynne.

¹³ Haroutunian, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

Swift and Satire

IRVIN EHRENPREIS¹

ONLY a few critics—Ricardo Quintana, Herbert Davis, F. R. Leavis, and some others—have tried to be specific about the satiric methods of Jonathan Swift. Most discussions go no further than an epithet like "complex" or "subtle" and the quoting of several samples. It is, however, not impossible to define a number of his main devices and to show their relationships.

To begin with, Swift's simple irony is plain enough. He writes the opposite of what he means, in a tone which indicates the real intention. But he can also be ironic about an irony. Gulliver's exposi-

tion of English law, for instance (IV, v), contains as a simple irony the rule that an upright man can win a case only by corrupting his opponent's counsel. The bribed lawyer—continues Gulliver in a higher irony—will then betray his own client by insinuating that the latter *has justice on his side*. (The judge is so depraved he will never give the decision to an honest party.) This method of betrayal is the reverse of what one would expect even within the initial irony. Yet it emphasizes the turpitude of the courts, which is of course Swift's whole point.

It is possible to go on in the same way to a third level. Again the statement

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must have a form corroborating or illustrating the preceding remark but seem to suggest the opposite. Those who approach the King of Luggnagg in Gulliver's third voyage (III, ix) must lick the floor. The King is in fact a man without mercy. Swift's simple irony is to call him merciful. As an "example" of this virtue, Gulliver says that noble Luggnaggians who are to be killed meet death by a poisonous powder sprinkled on the floor on the throne room. This may be called the double irony. The next step derives from an anecdote about a page who maliciously omits to have the floor washed after an execution. The result is the death of a fine young lord, against whose life the King had no design. In a triple irony Swift now has Gulliver report, "But this good Prince was so gracious, as to forgive the Page his Whipping, upon Promise that he would do so no more, without special Orders." Forgiveness in such circumstances is not what one associates with "graciousness"; neither does it fit the character of the King as already represented. It is another turn-about.

A final step is to suppress or slight the simple irony and assume that the reader understands it almost without being told. A famous specimen is the "Argument against Abolishing Christianity." Swift begins by saying that it may already be too late to alter the unanimous judgment; people seem agreed that Christianity ought to be abolished. He would like, however, to suggest some points which may still have been overlooked. Then he assures the reader that the author is not of course supporting true Christianity, which is hopelessly impractical: what he has in mind is nominal or ritual Christianity. This he proceeds to defend, first denying the advantages to be gained by abolishing such "Christianity," then de-

scribing *mock* advantages to be derived from keeping it: for example, the social utility of parsons who supply harmless targets for the insolence of great wits and distract the latter from falling on each other.

The real attitude behind this satire is that Christianity is as valuable now as it has ever been; it is the most important aspect of human life. Swift's simple but suppressed irony is therefore, "True Christianity is impractical." Instead of carrying forward this basic ridicule, he raises it one power to "Nominal Christianity has many advantages and is worth preserving." Finally, on the third level, he lists a series of absurd arguments which in themselves look like faults of nominal Christianity but are stated as values.

Quite apart from irony, another satiric technique which Swift exploits fully is invective. The critics of the Anglican church he describes, in his "Apology" for *A Tale of a Tub*, as "heavy, illiterate Scriblers, prostitute in their Reputations, vicious in their Lives, and ruin'd in their Fortunes." A masterpiece of this sort is his character of Wharton: "He is a Presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion; but he chooses at present to whore with a Papist."

While name-calling as such is sufficiently effective, Swift has an extraordinary ability to fuse many invectives by means of an image or symbol, a sharp, detailed vignette which summarizes vividly a mass of insults. Dryden, in the *Battle of the Books*, rides an enormous, though exhausted, horse and wears a helmet nine times too big for him; he looks like the "lady" in a lobster. The ingenious picture impresses itself at once upon our imagination, and we share—for the moment—Swift's disdain for Dryden. In Gulliver's third voyage he meets phi-

losophers so self-absorbed that servants must flap their ears with a bladder to alert them for conversation. The absurdity of the absent-minded metaphysician catches us unexpectedly, and we stop taking philosophy seriously while the symbol stays with us.

A further expansion of this device is to set the image in motion and hang an allegory upon the resulting plot. The outcome is a myth. In the *Battle of the Books* Swift collects all the ancients in his portrait of the bee, all the moderns in the spider. Rather than leave them static, he arranges a conflict; the product is one of the finest parables in English literature. *A Tale of a Tub* has many examples of myth-building which can be analyzed as expanded invective: simple episodes, as in the Bedlam scenes; elaborate enigmas, as in the tailor-worship of Section II; or the supreme fable of the three brothers.

Recently a third aspect of Swiftian satire has received special attention, his use of *personae*. It is true Swift almost never published a work over his own signature. On the other hand, he regularly gave a special angle to his satire by adopting a mask. The assumed personality did not always receive a name and sometimes was not even specified. Two qualities, however, are common to all the façades: objectivity and ingenuousness. He is always a man without guile and without selfish views. The historian of the *Conduct of the Allies* is in these respects identical with the narrator of the *Battle of the Books*, although both are anonymous. The author of "An Argument against Abolishing Christianity" remains largely undistinguished except for these traits. He is a disinterested and unimpassioned commentator; it is *pro bono publico* that he offers his suggestions, and that quite unaggressively. The Examiner, while not properly named, has

a designation; and Swift pretty carefully suits the tone of his periodical attacks on the Whigs to his hints about "himself" in *Examiner* No. 15 (originally 16). Other disguises are much more restrictive—and so more effective—for example, Bickerstaff, the public-spirited and rational astrologer, or M. B. Drapier, the middle-class merchant who fears for his own and his countrymen's business.

The advantage of these "fronts" is probably their appeal to the unsuspecting reader. Generally they are of a middling order of man. Anybody can recognize their values; few people will not share their homely ideals: sincerity, utility, business as usual, common sense. The enemy is correspondingly labeled wily, treacherous, evasive, selfish. As a result, the ordinary reader will automatically identify himself with the protagonist, Swift's "voice," and will normally associate himself with the opinions thereby implied. When the implications are ironic, the effect is all the more shocking as the startled reader *dissociates* himself from the *persona*.

Gulliver's last voyage is an incomparable application of these methods. The proposition is that men are irrational, animal rather than intellectual. Hence the simple irony, "Of course, men are morally superior to animals." Suppressing this statement, Swift continues, "Horses are, to be sure, more capable of reason than men are." And he describes the Houyhnhnms. Then he presents the Yahoos and moves to the last step, "But how much more degenerate men can be when they have their way!"

The myth-building arises from invective. Instead of calling men filthy, prurient, selfish, belligerent, and proud, he displays them as incipient apes. His ideal of the reasonable has a similarly detailed portrait. By giving both these creations

life and interaction, he produces the most effective of his fables.

And the observer is Lemuel Gulliver, greatest of Swift's *personae*. One of the absurdest errors in reading the book is to interpret him as Swift. No identification is less likely. The elderly dean dreaded sea voyages, had contempt for speculative science, was sophisticated and pessimistic toward mankind, lacked an immediate family, and was the last person to conform to other people's schemes. No, if Gulliver is anyone, he is the reader. Moderately successful, infused with the ordinary bourgeois ambitions, benevolent and hopeful toward man, boastful about his native land and about European civilization, he has an irresistible attraction

for the reader's fantasies of identification. After going through the opening episodes, one becomes Gulliver. And with him one frees one's mind from reliance upon passion and false doctrine until he is ready for the lesson of Part IV. Then, among reasonable beings, he can be converted to reason.

Even Gulliver may be irrational, though, when he returns to the human world and plans to reform it. As he expresses his shock at the stubborn Yahoo qualities of his family and nation, the intemperate surprise suggests a new growth of Yahooism in Lemuel; and so he admits in his letter to Sympson. This is Swift's concluding irony. The Houyhnhnms would have known better.

Time for a New Indoor Sport

CLARENCE L. KULISHECK¹

IT SEEMS only yesterday that the intense little world of literary quarterlies and professional journals was in a great stew about the misguided attempt to drive the new criticism underground by proving it politically subversive. This earnest effort to read sinister Fascistic plots into the literary criticism of political innocents, whose activities (when the facts were known) usually proved to be nothing more nefarious than drinking martinis for the Spanish loyalists in the late thirties and having a kind word for old Ezra's poetry in the late forties, is already beginning to seem more than a little ridiculous. But now a new diversion is under way. The popular amusement at present is the equally earnest (and often equally humorless) attempt to laugh the new critics out of existence.

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This diversion is not really new. It began at least three years ago at the 1948 meeting of the MLA when Douglas Bush "set the table on a roar" with a sparkling analysis of some of the more flagrant gaffes of the top brass among what he called "the new aesthetes." Professor Bush's performance, of course, was not without humor, and it was in the best of taste. Given the speaker's seasoned wit, his impeccably good manners, and his impressive and gracefully carried fund of humanistic learning, it could not have been otherwise.² It was, if anything, however, too successful, and it set off a chain reaction in the world of criticism not always particularly edifying to follow. I refer of course to the rash of hilarious parodies and burlesques which have been appearing in this magazine, in the *Ameri-*

² Published in *PMLA*, March, 1949, pp. 13-21.

can Scholar, in the *New Yorker*, and elsewhere during the last year or so.

The favorite method of attack here is a *reductio ad absurdum* which parodies the new criticism in terms of its worst excesses. To the uninformed reader at least this approach suggests, whether intentionally or not, that all the new critics—the good, the bad, and the indifferent—are a motley pack of pretentious ignoramuses. The joke reached a climax of sorts in Thomas Kyd's audacious and amazingly successful hoax in the summer issue of the *American Scholar*, but I doubt that we have seen the last of it. It is only a matter of time, I suppose, before we will be treated to still another of these elaborate *jeux* designed to show with the customary cocking of the eye and strained *sotto voce* asides to the reader that Shelley's "The Indian Serenade" is such a veritable nest of ironies, paradoxes, and ambiguities as to make even Donne's "The Canonization" and "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" look like vapid pieces of late Victorian impressionism. Inevitably, of course, there will be the uproarious paragraph commending Shelley in the best deadpan manner for his artful resuscitation of the *sub rosa* potentialities of the verb "to die" in its Jacobean context. That will lead to a really side-splitting job of close reading on

The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
Beloved as thou art!—

demonstrating with many a just barely concealed giggle that the passage is actually a suppressed metaphor in which the poet is making a lewd assault on the lady's inviolability by picturing her as compliantly recumbent beneath him. The jokes about the aesthetic critics are getting almost as heady (and as tedious) as the excesses they lampoon. To get the

full implications of this one, for instance, you have to know not only what Brooks and Warren said about "The Indian Serenade," what Brooks *solus* said about "The Canonization," and what brother Tate said about "Valediction," but also what Jeffrey Fleece said about what Brooks and Warren said about Joyce Kilmer's "Trees."

I wonder if it isn't just about time that somebody neither young nor old enough to hold either old-fashioned scholars or new-fashioned aestheticians in contempt might ask just how the best interests of *any* kind of criticism are being served by all this tomfoolery. Isn't it just about time to call a halt to this exaggerated tongue-in-the-cheek business, this poking-in-the-ribs and kicking-under-the-table sort of thing?

That the new critics often overreach themselves and as a rule pull altogether too long a face is obvious; that they served and are serving a real need ought to be equally apparent. It is true of course that they need desperately to learn how to loosen up occasionally. About that matter, I want only to say that I wish all the formalists would write more often as I have heard some of them talk. But isn't it being a bit myopic to act as though it were the new critics who had introduced the lugubrious tone into literary criticism? How many laughs after all in E. K. Chambers? In Basil Willey? In nine out of ten learned journals picked up at random?

It is regrettable, of course, that even the "good" new critics so often found it necessary to preface their positive contributions to criticism with deprecatory references to sound scholarship and to honored names in the history of scholarship. In the earlier days of the movement at least there were altogether too many superior dismissals of "the busy gentle-

men in the libraries" and "the assiduous coral-reefers in the learned journals." It was too frequently forgotten by even the best of the "good" new critics that the most impressive of their own formalistic analyses rested on a foundation of solid historical scholarship, of scholarship which they had absorbed even while seeming to repudiate it. (I am speaking here, of course, only of the "good" new critics. We are already beginning to see what happens to criticism when it falls into the hands of goggle-eyed youngsters who apparently have never known anything but the new criticism. May God preserve us from many more of these disembodied, autotelic visions!)

To some extent, of course, this Olympian scorn for other types of literary study may have been nothing more than the pardonable enthusiasm of the newcomer trying to shock an indifferent public into paying attention to him. If so, it was a strategy that worked. But in recent years there has been increasing evidence of a conciliatory urge among some of the cooler (and grayer) heads in the school. If the reader keeps his eyes open these days, he can spot more than one cagey retraction strategically buried in the study aids to new anthologies or in subordinate paragraphs of minor essays on irrelevant subjects. Not so wide as a church door—true—but, for the record, *they are there*.

We ought not to forget, however, even in the heat of present controversy, the conditions that were the occasion for the early successes of the new criticism. Even those whose graduate-school days go no farther back than the middle thirties have little trouble in resurrecting wry memories of the typical seminar in American literature in which a host of literary nonentities with the right opinions got the full socio-economic-historical

treatment while Henry James was dismissed in an hour or two—more often than not, with a Parringtonian under-estimate or a Brooksonian misinterpretation. And who can forget the course in the eighteenth century where nobody's ear was ever attuned to the delicate music of Pope's couplet because everybody was too busy tracking down "background" through a maze of philosophical hacks from Shaftesbury through Paley? It was high time that somebody gave some attention to the proper centering of literary study again. If the situation is somewhat better in many graduate schools today, the new criticism is at least partially responsible for the improvement.

An apologia for aesthetic criticism, however, is not my purpose in this paper. I should like instead to make a plea for the case of what might be called—to borrow a phrase from political economy—the vital center in criticism. It's a position we cannot get along without—no more in the battle of the books than in the war of ideologies. Now it is altogether possible (and I speak from personal experience) for one to have been reared on Parrington and nourished through intellectual adolescence on Malcolm Cowley, Edmund Wilson, and the *Partisan Review* and still be able to read Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, and the *Kenyon Review* with pleasure and profit. It is also entirely possible to vibrate appropriately to all seven types of ambiguity without any diminution of the requisite deference due to Manly and Kittredge and the rest of the roster of honored dead. And even if it is perhaps best to leave the later Edmund Wilson where he is most often found nowadays—comfortably sandwiched between the glossy indorsements of dubonnet blonde and platinum bracelets in the pages of a modish weekly—there is still a

room or two in Axel's castle where a well-wrought urn would not be out of place. There ought still to be a place for intelligent eclecticism in matters of critical taste, but in these bold and buccaneering times we don't hear much about it.

Now I should like to see a new series of critiques on the new criticism, a series designed to discover and elucidate what

is good about it. Naturally, there is a proscriptive condition about the prospective author. He must be somebody other than a new critic doggedly grinding some special ax for himself and his colleagues or some old critic laughing himself silly over their egregious ignorance of the *Variorum Shakespeare* and the *OED*. Almost anybody else will do.

Poetry as Experience

MARTIN SCHOLTEN¹

MY EXPERIENCE in the teaching of poetry covers a dozen years, equally divided between senior high school and college. For the last six years I have been teaching the subject on the college level as one of a panel of introduction-to-literature courses. My most difficult problems, however, have usually been neither the college sophomores nor the senior high school students but the enlightened college juniors and seniors who, under the compulsion of fulfilling certain minimum requirements in literature, have postponed as it were the "evil day" for the study of poetry. To surmount the mental block of a college senior (a would-be engineer, let us say, or a junior executive) is, I submit, some measure of success. That I have had an occasional success even with my junior executives may be some justification for the belief that certain procedures do lead to desired goals in our ever varying contest.

To begin negatively, I have discovered at least one procedure which I am sure is *not* effective. It has been gaily stigmatized by Mr. Jeffrey Fleece in a recent article² replying to Messrs. Brooks and Warren's critical tearing-apart in their

college anthology of that cherished favorite "Trees." Do not attempt (and certainly not attempt in the beginning) to win over the student by the pretentious critical dissection of a poem which he is likely to admire. Let us avoid, at all costs, such literary snobbism! Nor, in doing so, need we stoop to conquer. I usually begin by pointing out that anyone who has been moved deeply by a human experience is a potential poet and that poetry is, indeed, as natural a part of life as the activities which all persons enjoy. (Elementary perhaps, even a trifle naïve; but let us not forget some of the literary responses of the Cambridge élite to the experiments of I. A. Richards.) Then I gently plead—with one eye fixed on my junior executive—for the open-minded attitude, and I follow this with the assurance that our semester's journey will not be marked with the usual detours of forced memorization, exercises in scanning, or long papers.

How, then, do my students earn their credit hours in the introduction to poetry? Quite simply. They do so by read-

¹ University of Toledo.

² "Further Notes on a 'Bad Poem,'" *College English*, March, 1951.

ing poems or, more precisely, by experiencing poems. Accurate, intensive reading, however, is the essential springboard into the experience. As an instructor I am willing to employ any approach that a given poem demands; but an accurate understanding of the denotative qualities or the "plain sense" of the poem is the first consideration.³ We do not in my classes "gush" about the beauties of poetry. I point out that, to experience a poem fully, all of one's faculties, including the intellectual, must be brought into play; and I point out further that our profoundest experiences are not, as a rule, the most easily attainable.

Obviously, I do not begin with the most demanding poetry. The ballad or the simple lyric will best serve as a point of departure. But, whatever the difficulty of the assignment, the student's preparation consists mainly of careful reading, with a dictionary at his elbow. (*Every* word of a poem must be understood in its context.) I make it an almost invariable practice, then, to read the poem aloud in class before the ensuing discussion which may on occasion—those credit hours again!—take the form of a brief written quiz. In any event, the questions must be relevant to the meaning, or to possible levels of meaning, in a given poem. Consider, for example, the set of Hardy's sonnet entitled "Hap":

How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily
 strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

The most relevant questions here concern the image in lines 3 and 4 and the

³ Mr. Ivor Winters has commented with good sense on the subject of denotative and connotative meaning in a poem (*In Defense of Reason* [New York, 1941], pp. 11-12).

reference of "Doomsters" in line 5. If the student, as he is likely to do, misses the image of the craps shooters, he misses the underlying imaginative experience, as well as the fundamental *meaning*, of the poem.

This sonnet, which is certainly not one for beginning study, suggests another problem related to the total experience of a poem—and that is the problem of unfamiliar or unassimilated experience. The concept of fate in the sonnet just quoted may not be integral to the student's experience, but he must be willing to accept it as necessary to Hardy's poem, even though he doesn't believe in it. I usually introduce this problem on a simpler level by pointing out the fact that, although I myself have never actually felt Masfield's nostalgic yearning for the sea, I can do so while reading a Masfield lyric. Again, on a more difficult level, Hardy's magnificent "The Convergence of the Twain," subtitled "Lines on the Loss of the 'Titanic,'" provides an excellent illustration. If we have fully experienced the poem, the coming-together of the iceberg and the ship was inevitably determined, even though we may not agree with Hardy's concept of the Immanent Will.

The problem suggested by these examples, a problem involving Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief," should not be labored, although it is, I think, extremely significant in relation to the poetic experience. It also suggests the peculiar significance of poetry as a humanizing force. But let us remember that our role is primarily that of the teacher—not of the moralist or reformer. The wisdom of poetry must come out of the felt experience which begins with delight.⁴

⁴ In the broadest sense, the delight may arise from tragic sources. This concept of the fundamental gaiety of art is expressed with deep imaginative

The student who has experienced in Hardy's great poem the strange and terrible convergence of the iceberg and the ship is a wiser student in his knowledge of the forces of destiny. But the knowledge is an inseparable part of the total poetic experience. In this regard, Archibald MacLeish's famous utterance that

A poem should not mean
But be

is profoundly true. But neither, in the introduction to poetry, are we primarily aestheticians.

Although it were wise to avoid aesthetic niceties, shall we ignore completely the structural aspects of poetry? The answer must be an emphatic "No." It is essential to show how a poem exists as a structural unit, and for this purpose some technical knowledge is necessary, but not a pedantic or specialized knowledge. Consider, for example, the treatment of prosody. For how many of our students have the mental blocks been firmly cemented in struggles with scansion? The irony of this situation, of course, lies in the fact that the orthodox methods usually taught are quite inadequate, a fact that the poets have always known. But we should not for this reason ignore the basic element of rhythm or the other so-called devices of poetry. Let our approach, however, be a functional one. Few students are so tone-deaf and deficient in rhythmical sense as to be unable to detect, for example, the importance of the meter in such a piece as Herrick's "To Daffodils."

We have short time to stay as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die,

insight in Yeats's poem "Lapis Lazuli" (W. B. Yeats, *Last Poems and Plays* [New York, 1940], pp. 4-5).

As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain,
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

The theme of this exquisite poem is the perennial one of mutability and death; yet the feeling is not one of a darkling and heavy sorrow. Even without prompting from the instructor, many students are able to experience how the lightness and grace of the meter affect the tone. Rhythm combines with the imagery and deft handling of exaggerated comparison—"We have short time to stay as you"—to produce the over-all effect. Contrasting the delicate pathos of Herrick's poem with, for example, the solemn and woeful organ music of Shakespeare's "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought" will serve better than a thousand exercises in scansion to show how rhythm, together with other devices common to poetry, helps to create of poems on the same theme separate and distinct experiences.

No, we should not be afraid to "analyze" a poem in terms of its component elements. But the analysis should involve more than the mechanical process of selection based on the ability to recognize certain devices. The important thing is to realize what, for example, the rhythm, alliteration, metaphor, etc., *do* to the poem considered as a structural unit. How, in other words, do they contribute to our enjoyment through the means that distinguish poetry from other forms of literary communication? This is as close to definition as I think we may safely come. Anything, I should say, which contributes to a richer appreciation, including historical and textual knowledge, is a valid subject for discussion. But let us always keep our sights

leveled on the primary target: the overall experience of the poem itself!

So much for the general approach. But how—and I now face up squarely to the inevitable problem!—does one evaluate in the orthodox terms of grades a student's ability to experience a poem? There is doubtless an element of absurdity in our attempts to measure certain imponderables. The real test of *our* accomplishments as teachers in terms of what the student has derived from our courses can seldom be known to us. It is inherent in the question as to what the student does long after the grades have been duly recorded and the diploma tucked away in the unused dresser drawer.

The instructors in our department concerned with teaching of the "Introduction to Poetry" have evolved, however, a consistent method of evaluation. It combines, we believe, the utmost of teaching freedom with a definite course organization designed for the general improvement of standards. Briefly, it is based on the assumption that our students have carefully studied approximately fifty poems during a given semester. These poems, chosen each semester by unanimous agreement of the instructors involved, are taken from various periods in British and American literature. All of them are significant and many of them, considered by the test of time, great poems. Although lyric poetry predominates, we always try to include some examples of dramatic and narrative forms on the required list. Also, the student is asked to read "on his own" two or three narrative or dramatic poems as preparation for a discussion question on the final examination. We have used a variety of anthologies; our choice, however, is determined primarily on the basis of the range and

quality of the selections—not on accompanying critical or biographical material.

The student's grade is derived in the main from the departmental midterm and final examinations based largely on the poems listed for intensive reading and class discussion. These examinations, which are at least 80 per cent objective, usually include questions dealing with recognition of typical passages, the matching of critical statements pertaining to these selections, and the analysis of a presumably unfamiliar poem together with an essay-type question on the poems assigned for outside reading. The instructor may supplement the examinations as he chooses. We are generally agreed that an occasional short paper developing some rather specific point is for our purposes the most helpful form of supplementary work. That we do not choose to assign a long critical paper does not, I like to believe, reflect our own indolence. Frankly, we have found from experience that such an assignment on the sophomore level is relatively worthless. Again, I would merely mention, in passing, Professor Richards' critical experiments with graduate students recorded in his *Practical Criticism*.

During the four years since this plan was first put into effect there has been, on the basis of the examination scores, a perceptible rise in the general achievement level. But it should perhaps be emphasized that such departmental procedures have not been devised for the purpose of "checking" on individual instructors. Deviations from the grade norm (which has, as I have indicated, shown perceptible improvement) reflect little more, we believe, than the usual deviations in student ability. Such procedures do, however, place on both instructors and students a responsibility—a responsibility

ity derived from the shared pleasures of experiencing great poetry.

I say "shared" advisedly, because the method outlined is one in which students, as well as the instructor, contribute. There was, for example, the former AAF pilot's interpretation of G. M. Hopkins' striking line, "When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush," conjuring up for us a vision of the lush English spring with the bent meadow grasses glimmering like wheels in the dappled light. There was the brilliant comment by the heretofore reticent young man on Yeats's "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" which probed to the very heart of that remarkably fine poem and silenced the skeptical concerning the validity of its psychology. There was, to cite a final instance, the penetrating analysis by a heretofore apparently indifferent young lady of the time theme as revealed in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and MacLeish's "You, Andrew Marvell."

These examples, and others like them, epitomize of course the true rewards of the teacher of poetry—rewards that, at the risk of being sententious, I must insist are not to be found in examination scores or grade curves. They result indeed from these shared pleasures and from the knowledge that such experiences will, in a few instances at least, continue to form an intangible, though nonetheless real, bond between the instructor and his one-time students. The experience here is closely akin, I think, to that shared experience described with such quiet eloquence by Robert Frost in "A Tuft of Flowers." It is the humanizing force that comes, though we be physically far removed, through a common recognition of beauty. So by the miracle of the word—a power far greater than that of the atom—the little islands of our separate egos may be joined in the communication of that which not only makes man human but "in apprehension how like a god."

Experiments with Audio-Visual Aids

1. In Teaching Shakespeare

RICHARD H. GOLDSTONE¹

SHAKESPEARE's and Verdi's *Othello* recently were joint objects of study in a sophomore survey course at the University of Kentucky. Since the characterizations in the play and in the opera are very different indeed—the libretto, for example, is only a third the length of the play's text—and since the Verdi-Boito text² is a demonstrably

feeble and emasculated version of Shakespeare (yet admirable for the purpose it serves), how then can its use be justified in a general course in literature? The justification lies, of course, in the music. Shakespeare's play is the inspiration for what is often considered the greatest

² Boito, although a composer in his own right, devised the libretto of *Otello*, probably from a French translation of Shakespeare's play.

¹ City College, New York.

dramatic music ever composed. Just as passages of the Shakespeare play are mountain peaks in the verbal expression of perfect love, jealousy, hate, vengeance, despair, violence, and remorse, so is Verdi's opera a sublime musical fulfilment of the identical emotions scored by Shakespeare's genius. On those terms the two works are complementary.

A primary objective in teaching *Othello* was to demonstrate the capacity of tragedy to excite the emotions of pity and fear and, through the excitation of those emotions, to effect catharsis. A secondary objective was to illustrate the capacity of drama to portray character vividly, subtly, and convincingly. While a study of Shakespeare's play is sufficient to realize both objectives, it was the writer's belief that the use of Verdi's music would supplement and heighten the attainment of these aims. It was felt, moreover, that the aesthetic experience of hearing the music might prove a permanent source of enrichment by awakening the students' latent capacities to enjoy serious music whose meaning could be so arrestingly documented.

Procedure for the joint study began in conventional fashion. The class had read *Othello*³ as a home assignment, and a class period was devoted to a general discussion of the play. The second class period of study began an examination of the text for the purpose of analyzing characterization, exposition, and motivation. When the class had reached Iago's soliloquy which closes the first act, Verdi was introduced. A sketchy translation of Iago's monologue, "Credo in un Dio crudel," introduced the recording of

Iago's "Credo." This was followed without interruption by the music which precedes Otello's landing upon the island of Cyprus, concluding with Otello's triumphant landing and his trumpet-toned announcement of the wreck of the Turkish fleet.

The class was then ready to compare Iago and Otello in terms of musical expression: how successful is Verdi in expressing Iago's villainy through the "Credo"? To what degree does Otello's opening invocation, "Esultate!" depict his nobility, courage, and grandeur? Why did Verdi assign Iago to a baritone, Otello to a tenor? Could a tenor voice have suggested the sinister elements of the "Credo"? Could a baritone voice have achieved the exultation of the "Esultate"?

From this point of discussion the class returned to the landing scene as delineated in Act II, scene 1, of the play. (Verdi begins the opera at this point of the play, events of the first act of the Shakespeare being telescoped in the Iago-Roderigo and Otello-Desdemona dialogues.) When the class reached the scene of the reunion between Othello and Desdemona and had sufficiently savored the lines beginning, "O my fair warrior," and ending, "Come Desdemona, / Once more well met at Cyprus," we again turned to the music of Verdi. It was pointed out how ingeniously Boito wove the materials of the love duet from the fabric of the lines just read and also from Act I of the play. In the love duet Otello and Desdemona together recollect their courtship in contrast with Othello's recounting of it before the Duke and the Senate. "She loved me for the dangers I had passed . . ." becomes "E tu m'avi per le mie sventure / Ed io t'amo per la tua pietà."

The love duet reveals also an aspect of

³ Textual references are to *The Living Shakespeare*, by Oscar James Campbell (1949), and to the *Metropolitan Opera House Grand Opera Libretto of Otello*, published by Fred Rullman, Inc., 17 East Forty-second Street, New York.

Verdi's genius demonstrated—by his musical adaptation of Shakespeare's "And this, and this, the greatest discords be (*kissing her*)" into the sublime kiss theme—"un bacio . . . un bacio—ancora un bacio," the theme he later uses before the murder of Desdemona and finally at the moment of Othello's ultimate expiation. Here in the love duet all the tenderness, accord, and sweet contentment of Shakespeare's lovers is given perfect expression in Verdi's music. This music, serene and pure, makes infinitely more painful our foreknowledge of the tragedy to come. It is at this moment that we grow certain that the mind and art of two great men, though separated in time, space, and milieu, fused into a seldom achieved oneness.

The next musical pause came when we reached the lines beginning "Avant! be gone! thou hast set me on the rack . . ." (Act III, scene 3, line 335). "O, now, for ever / Farewell the tranquil mind! . . ." materializes into Verdi's "Ora e per sempre addio." As Othello sings these lines, the orchestral accompaniment of martial tempo and muted trumpets so successfully re-creates his past glories that the smell of gunpowder seemed to have permeated the college classroom.

The scene continues with "Era la notte," in which we hear Iago's queasy accents recounting Cassio's dream, followed by Othello's cry of barbaric rage—"Sangue! Sangue! Sangue!" and the second-act climax, the duet, "Si pel ciel marmoreo giuro," that terrifying moment when Othello and Iago kneel swearing murder and vengeance.

Turning back to the dramatic text, the class examined Act III, scene 4—the handkerchief scene—and continued on to Othello's rejection of Desdemona in Act IV, scene 2. Noting first that Boito uses lines 34–96 of the former scene and lines

31–89 of the latter, the class listened to the Fazzoletto duet in which Desdemona's bewildered innocence in the face of Othello's rage is transformed into music alternately heart-breakingly pathetic and vividly savage.

Another element of Verdi's vast fountain of unbroken inspiration was revealed when the class reached the final scene of the play. The text describes: "*A bedchamber in the castle: DESDEMONA in bed asleep; a light burning. Enter OTHELLO.*" Verdi sets the scene with a short orchestral prelude which achieves the effect of harrowing up the soul and freezing the young blood of its listeners. The device Verdi uses is his intrusting the orchestral burden to a choir of double bass viols which agitatedly anticipate the fearful deed about to be done.

Finally, the pathos of Othello's dying words, "I kissed thee ere I killed thee: no way but this; / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss." finds its musical counterpart in the statement of the kiss theme on which the curtain falls, music which evokes the recollection of a perfect happiness not wholly lost.

This classroom experience in studying and comparing the dramatic text and the music extended over three fifty-minute class periods. The recordings cited are eleven in number and represent a total of forty-five minutes of music. The illustrative excerpts from the opera which were used are, of course, arbitrary choices and by no means represent the maximum of possibilities to the teacher who may choose to parallel the experiment. Verdi's *Othello*, either in its complete or abridged form, is available in most record libraries. Individual excerpts from the opera—in most instances superior recordings to those in the complete version—are available on both imported and domestic re-

leases. Libretti are available in quantity for thirty-five cents apiece.

And what of the response of the students to the experiment? A few were respectfully bored by the music, which is, after all, the mature work of Verdi at

seventy-four. In general, however, considerable enthusiasm was manifested, not only during class time but in the after-class commotion around the desk, which, for this writer, at least, is the only real indication of a lesson's success or failure.

2. *In Teaching Poetry*

BRUCE DEARING*

The teaching of poetry is of necessity a personal matter, and yet I am about to advocate the introduction into the classroom of two machines. One of these is the relatively tame phonograph, the other the somewhat terrifying magnetic tape recorder. Both can be related to the current and healthy concern for restoring the dimension of sound to the appreciation of poetry.

It has long been the practice of many excellent teachers to read poetry aloud to their classes, and I have heard of one immensely popular teacher who made it his custom merely to read a poem, close his eyes, and murmur "Beautiful, gentlemen, beautiful!" before going on to the next. There are at least two distinct limitations to this procedure, however. One is that too few of us read with anything like the finesse we imagine, are not always in good voice, and in all probability are limited in our range of performance, whatever our catholicity of taste. It is too much to expect even the most accomplished reader to be equally successful in performing, say, Chaucer, Pope, Tennyson, Yeats, and Auden.

Moreover, and this is a factor too easily overlooked, I think, there is often in the classroom a barrier impossible to overcome completely: a certain con-

straint and embarrassment shared by the teacher and the members of his class at hearing any one of them recite poems, especially lyric or dramatic poems, in the harsh surroundings of the classroom. It is most difficult to focus attention completely upon a poem when it is being presented through the medium of a visible creature whose socks and necktie may not match the mood or even one another, whose left hand may twitch with abortive gestures—an instrument toward which students have all sorts of attitudes quite irrelevant to the poem. If, as John Crowe Ransom has argued, the poem should be thought of as nearly anonymous, it is as sinful to substitute the personality of the reader for that of the poet as it is to substitute biography and literary history for the poetry. It may well be that a disembodied voice is the appropriate instrument for the performance of a poem. This effect can be achieved, essentially, by a judicious use of the phonograph and the recorder.

As has been reported variously and with enthusiasm recently, the selection of poetry on standard and LP records is rapidly increasing in quantity, quality, and availability. The "London Library of Recorded English," the Library of Congress "Twentieth-Century Poetry in English," and the "Harvard Vocation

* Swarthmore College.

Series" are among the most distinguished, and most readers of *College English* are surely on mailing lists for catalogues of poetry recordings available through individual houses, including those issued by the National Council of Teachers of English. Through these records, poems read by their authors (usually superbly, occasionally reassuringly badly) or by other poets and professional readers, attain meaning and appeal which few amateurs can invest them with. Such a library has been acquired by the Swarthmore College Department of English Literature on the basis of a modest grant and should be within the reach of most interested English departments.

The magnetic recorder is an extremely flexible device. Though a wire recorder may be used successfully, it is easier to operate and maintain a tape recorder. The possibilities of cutting and splicing the magnetic tape to achieve various juxtapositions become important when the machine is being used to instruct inexperienced readers—a category, incidentally, which embraces virtually all college students in America. In both the magnetic wire recorder and the magnetic tape recorder it is possible to use the same spool again and again and thus to escape the prohibitive costs and clumsy mechanics of the disk recorder.

Uses for such a machine in teaching poetry are almost unlimited, but some of the most obviously fruitful might be mentioned. It is possible, for example, for the teacher to select circumstances more hospitable than those of the classroom and there to make his recordings for use in lectures or discussions planned for the next day or the next week. For most people it may be that the most satisfactory arrangement is not to be alone with a microphone in one's study but to

be in one's living-room with a small audience of sympathetic friends. It is not easy to keep the hands of such friends off the microphone, and this fact may be turned to advantage. Because the same voice and speech mannerisms soon pall, it is often well to put together a spool representing a succession of three or more voices in alternation, or in groups, in the manner of Mr. Frankenberg's *Pleasure Dome* LP recording. One's neighbor in history or philosophy, or one's wife, may very well read certain poets or poems better than the accredited teacher of English, and, at the least, he is likely to learn something about recording technique and about the poetry itself by listening to his friends (and himself) perform. The same surely holds true for students. While a class recitation may produce only a flat and constrained reading of the most dramatic poem, getting students in small groups in the office or study to read poems they like and believe they understand will produce recordings to which they will all listen in class with keenest critical attention. Even in this vocal age few enough of them will have much idea of how they actually sound, and the experience will afford a new insight into the problems of communication, as well as a fresh appreciation and a more accurate understanding of the poems they read aloud.

Another inviting possibility is that by an afternoon's trudging from one to another of one's colleagues' offices with an easily portable machine, one can assemble an hour of recordings of say, Homer, Horace, Catullus, Wyatt, Baudelaire, and Garcia Lorca, to choose at random, which it would take an individual specialist months or years to prepare. In such fashion it is possible to present a colleague in the role of trained reader without disrupting schedules or sur-

mounting the physical difficulties of personal appearances. Language teachers have long been aware of the potentialities of recordings; they can be of particular assistance to teachers of English in exploring the areas of usefulness in our own field.

Both machines can be used to excellent advantage not only in the classroom and seminar but in local radio stations and informal gatherings under the auspices of the department. Poetry should be an eminently salable commodity, and if we do not believe in its being heard more widely, we are in the wrong profession. As a way of interesting colleagues

and students in the problems of reading and teaching poetry, and in the poetry itself, the use of recordings offers more promise than any alternative that has been seriously proposed.

This is by no means a suggestion that poetry classes be reduced to listening periods or that live poetry reading be suppressed. There is surely time and need for lectures, analyses, and discussions. My argument is only that teachers of poetry can no longer afford to be without access to a library of poetry recordings and some type of magnetic recorder for use in and outside of the poetry classroom.

3. *In Teaching Freshman English*

CORTELL K. HOLSAPPLE AND WARREN WOOD⁵

Visual aids such as the projection of film strips, instructional moving pictures, and animated cartoons have been productive in the teaching of various subjects involving skills, content material, and appreciation. It seemed desirable to Dean Holsapple and Professor Wood of Texas Christian University to test such a procedure in some freshman English sections for its effectiveness in teaching the fundamentals of composition.

It was determined to enlist the aid of those members of the English department staff who were teaching two or more similar sections of English 311A (the first semester of the freshman course). Thus the same instructor would have both a control group and an experimental group; he would then be able to eliminate all differences in procedure except for some form of visual assistance in the experimental group. Dr. Karl B.

Snyder, Mrs. Rita McAlister, Mrs. Mary B. Waddill, and Miss Lura Gregory graciously consented to carry out the work. The experiment was conducted at Texas Christian University during the year 1949-50 under the joint auspices of the university and the Carnegie Fund for the improvement of teaching.

Each instructor agreed to teach his two sections in as similar a way as possible with the single exception that he would project student themes upon a screen for discussion and criticism for at least twelve twenty-minute periods in the experimental group.

The projector was large enough to handle a full page of 8½ by 11 inches, and powerful enough by virtue of its two 500-watt lamps to be used in even a partially darkened classroom. The machine used was a Beseler, OA 3.

Since the students had already been given the Purdue Placement Test in

⁵ Texas Christian University.

English (Form A or Form B) at the time of their enrolment, this was used as a pretest. For a final score, each student completed another form of the same test. The obvious advantages of such a procedure are in the standardization of the test itself, its ease of administration and scoring, and in its validity as a means of determining a student's mechanical skills in composition.

Students who were repeating the course and those who missed the entrance examinations were eliminated from the statistical analysis, thus reducing the total number by about a third.

Before the experiment was started, the instructors were given a brief period of instruction in the use of the machine and in the desired procedure. It was agreed to confine the projected material to the students' themes and to advance from carefully marked and corrected papers to completely unmarked selections in which the students were to discover and correct the errors. The most attention was devoted to manuscript correctness such as capitalization and the handling of numbers, to spelling, and to sentence unity and coherence, although some reference to diction, style, and poor organization was inescapable.

Fifty-seven students were kept in control groups; forty-eight in experimental sections. Decile ranks were determined from published statistics accompanying the Purdue Placement Test (see Table 1).

Of the control group, 31, or 54.4 per cent, increased their rank by as much as 10 points. Of the experimental group, 26, or 54.1 per cent, increased their rank by as much as 10 points.

Of the control group, 10, or 17.5 per cent, lost rank after the instruction. Of the experimental group, 10, or 20.8 per cent, lost rank.

This experiment seems to suggest that there is no positive aid obtained by the use of the visual projection but rather that little or no difference is detected. The number of cases is too small to pass final judgment, and it is felt that additional experimentation is warranted.

The instructors' personal appraisal of the technique was more favorable than the statistical analysis would justify. Miss Gregory wrote: "The use of the machine is also a time-saver. One explanation of an error in a paper pro-

TABLE 1

DECILE	CONTROL		EXPERIMENTAL	
	Pretest	Final	Pretest	Final
9th....	6	11	5	10
8th....	5	12	8	8
7th....	4	8	7	9
6th....	10	4	7	5
5th....	4	6	2	2
4th....	13	5	4	3
3d....	7	5	6	7
2d....	5	2	2	1
1st....	1	0	4	3
Below 0	2	4	3	0
	N = 57	N = 57	N = 48	N = 48

jected before . . . the class is equivalent to two or three explanations without the projector."

Mrs. McAlister approved the technique as a good motivation, adding that "students seemed to want to make fewer 'public' errors. I also found that seeing an error on the screen helped to 'fix' that mistake in the students' minds so they were less likely to make the same mistake again."

Dr. Snyder mentioned favorably the "keen student interest" and the usefulness of the machine in teaching correct grammar and usage. He continued: "The teaching of the larger errors of para-

graphing and proportion . . . is made easier and at the same time more effective."

Mrs. Waddill noted most of the foregoing advantages and added that the machine was of value in correcting "sloppy handwriting."

The most visible effect of the projection technique is on the students' interest. They become animated, eager to recite, and most cordial to even this slight deviation from standard classroom procedure. One instructor informally quoted a boy who exclaimed upon seeing the projector, "Oh, goody, we're gonna have pitchers again." Disregarding his method of communication, one finds that his reaction is fairly typical.

Although Dr. Wood did not have paired sections which could be used in this experiment, he used the machine several times in one section of freshman

English. The students were very anxious to see their papers projected. Possibly this attitude is a type of exhibitionism such as motivates people to get into radio quiz shows; but, at any rate, it led to requests for further use of the machine. He noted, too, that there was a mildly malicious eagerness to harass the poor student whose paper was being shown, especially if he were so ill advised as to admit his authorship by some sort of defense. One limiting factor was that of eyestrain and fatigue: the projector throws a very large image, and the size of the average classroom brings the projection too close to the students' eyes, causing strain and occasional headaches. It appeared that twenty to twenty-five minutes is the best length of time for the projection technique and that periods longer than that would cause a decline in efficiency.

College Freshmen Reconsider and Suggest

HOYT C. FRANCHERE¹

WHAT do college freshmen think of their English programs as preparation for their college years? To get the answer to this question, during the past spring quarter there was prepared and presented to composition students in three of Oregon's state-supported institutions of higher learning a questionnaire designed, it was hoped, to reveal what in elementary and high school English courses may need strengthening. Nearly two thousand students answered the questions asked—students from Oregon

as well as from other states and other countries, students from public as well as from private and parochial schools. And, though the answers to some of these questions leave the interpreter skeptical, there is yet a not inconsiderable validity in the questionnaire as a whole.

Here are some of the details:

OF GRADE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE (VI THROUGH VIII)

Less than half of the students wrote themes in the upper grades; and, of those who wrote them, only 25 per cent wrote more than a dozen. And, no matter whether the teacher's approach to gram-

¹ Associate professor and supervisor of English studies, General Extension Division, Oregon State System of Higher Education.

mar was formal or functional, only a half to three-fourths of the students considered adequate their training in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and the parts of speech. Less than 35 per cent had adequate training in the construction of phrases and clauses.

OF HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Though 84 per cent of the students had six or more semesters of high school English, 82 per cent had only a moderate amount of experience with the fundamentals. When these students were freshmen in high school, 47 per cent wrote no themes at all; as sophomores 34 per cent wrote no themes; as juniors, 29 per cent; and as seniors, 28 per cent. And in each of the four years nearly 50 per cent wrote so few themes as to make their writing practice scarcely worth while. Most of them, of course, wrote book reports which were corrected by their instructors.

Of the 1,600 who were assigned other than textbook reading by their English teachers, nearly 75 per cent read from one to ten biographies and novels in their four years, 33 per cent read from one to ten books concerned with historical subjects, and 15 per cent read from one to ten books dealing with science. Twenty-five per cent were excused from final examinations; and, of those who took "finals," only 8 per cent wrote the essay type chiefly; 30 per cent were given true-false or multiple-choice examinations chiefly; and 62 per cent were given about an equal number of each type.

Moreover, the questionnaire reveals that almost 50 per cent of the college freshmen at one time in their high school careers served as class officers, more than 50 per cent were elected to club offices, and almost 25 per cent became student-

body leaders, so that opportunity for some practice in oral English was perhaps greater for this group than for other high school students.

OF COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Despite the fact that students who attend college are supposed to meet certain minimum requirements and standards of scholarship, 20 per cent of the entering freshmen were required to take at least one term of remedial English. Beyond that and in the regular college year of composition, nearly 66 per cent of the students received, as an average, grades of *C*, *D*, or *F* on papers marked with a single grade. On papers marked with double grades, more than 50 per cent received, as an average, grades of *C* or below for content and nearly 66 per cent *C*, *D*, or *F* for mechanics.

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that, when asked to give their opinions about high school preparation in English, 70 per cent of the college freshmen considered it inadequate. Of these, about 50 per cent indicated that they were not given sufficient experience with the language in their English classrooms. Eleven per cent said that they did not take enough of the English courses offered; 35 per cent admitted that they did not work hard enough; 28 per cent thought their instruction poor; 11 per cent said that they had been excused too often from English classes to take part in extra-curricular activities.

Finally, they were asked this question: "Considering your present needs for writing, speaking, and understanding your English language and literature, what could your high school program have offered more adequately to prepare you for your college work?" The answers here

are significant.² Perhaps they can best be listed as follows:

	Per Cent
More practice in writing compositions	54
More practice in mechanics	37
More practice in sentences and paragraphs	14
More practice in spelling	13
More practice in organization and outlining	13
More practice in punctuation	10
More practice in reading	10
More practice in public speaking	7
More practice in vocabulary	6
More counseling	3
Learning better study habits	1

THE SUMMATION

One should not hasten too quickly to conclusions about the answers given in this questionnaire, for the problems of the teacher of English are manifold and complex. Whether he be elementary, high school, or college teacher of his language and literature, he is, or should be, concerned chiefly with the practice of reading, writing, speaking, listening—and, above all, thinking. Since as a rule somewhat more than 70 per cent of high school graduates have entered classrooms for the last time, it may with reason be said that the success or failure of our democracy rests with the success or failure of the teaching program through the first twelve grades. And since the success of any student depends particularly upon his ability to understand, to think, and to give expression to what he has learned or to what he wishes to say (no matter what form this may take), the responsibility of the English teacher probably exceeds that of any other teacher in the educational program.

² An interesting parallel is afforded in the answers given last year by Michigan State College students to the general question: "In what way do you think your high school could improve on its program in preparing students for college?" Of the twenty-six typical answers listed, nine stressed the need for more thorough training in English, or, more particularly, in writing, reading, and speaking.

Has adequate recognition of this fact been made by the administrators of our school systems?

Certainly, if college freshmen have not had sufficient experience in writing—the questionnaire pretty well establishes this fact—then it follows that the English programs of most of our public school students are inadequate. Our best English teachers are themselves aware of the inadequacy, but they cannot alone effect a reformation; and their individual efforts must prove futile where a program does not allow the necessary time for study and practice in writing or where their classes are too heavily loaded for individual guidance and criticism of their students' written work.

In a number of communities throughout the country, school superintendents and teachers are presently reorganizing their programs in English as well as in other basic studies. Two cities in Oregon—Portland and Eugene—for example, have already made plans for revaluation and reformation of the English training. Having learned this last spring through city-wide examinations that their high school seniors were below par in achievement in English, Portland English teachers, with the strong support of their administrators, have taken steps at once to strengthen their program at its weakest points.³ A special course has been devised in an effort to improve the writing of their graduates-to-be. Such a step is of course helpful and may prove beneficial to many high school youngsters.

But only if the English program is reinforced at all grade levels—a goal Portland teachers have set for themselves—

³ Wilma Morrison, "City Schools Start 'Operation English' To Lift Standard of Written Language to Higher Level," *Oregonian*, September 9, 1951, p. 12.

will the best results come. A special course for seniors deficient in writing skill is, after all, only an expediency and must necessarily deal with accumulated failures, results of earlier inadequacies, and not with basic causes. A reorganization of the writing program must be begun in the upper grades, at the latest, and must be carried on in every grade through the twelfth. How, one may ask, does a child learn to play the piano if not by practicing at the keyboard? If he is to become skilled on his instrument, he must practice daily and for extended periods. Now, while it is true that before he starts to school a child grows in his power of expression, he grows only through hearing the language. As he progresses through the grades, his need for practice in writing increases: his need to put words on paper and to examine critically what he has written. Along with the writing, of course, he should learn to read and to listen critically; he should increase his vocabulary; and he should have the individual attention and guidance of his instructor.

If the best results are to be achieved, both school administrators and parents of children will have to face the problem of a revised English program realistically and sympathetically. For one thing, class loads of teachers who are expected to direct the English work must be so reduced as to permit the instructor to work with each individual student. In some high schools in Oregon, for example, and doubtless in many other states as well, English teachers are known to have as many as six sections of English each day, with thirty-five or more students in each section. Besides this load, they are required to advise such extra-curricular activities as school annuals and newspapers, to direct plays, or to supervise study periods in classrooms or libraries.

Suppose that a conscientious teacher assigns a short written paper to all his classes once a week. At a minimum of six minutes for each paper, he will have to spend twenty hours correcting these papers, in addition to the thirty hours he spends in classrooms and the ten hours or more that he must spend at his school, preparing for his classes and advising student activities. His is a sixty-hour week, and he will find it necessary to work both Saturdays and Sundays. Even if he has only five English sections of twenty-five students each, along with his sixth hour of library supervision, for example, with the same short paper assigned he will still average something over fifty hours each week. These are minimum figures! Just how much actual practice in writing and how much individual attention and criticism will his students get? No teacher can be expected to carry such a burden of this exacting kind of labor perseveringly through each semester. He will assign fewer papers, and his students will have less writing experience.

Reduction of class loads in English courses becomes, then, the primary concern of the administrator who would improve his English program. Parents of his students and taxpayers generally must be made aware of this fact.

Of almost equal importance is the selection of teachers whose preparation in language and literature is adequate to their task, and the reassignment to their proper studies of teachers who are not sufficiently well prepared for the English work. It will not do (as in some systems it is being done) to ask men and women with degrees in history and physical education or mathematics and geography, for instance, to carry even one or two English sections. School administrators must re-examine teacher qualifications and make necessary adjustments in their

assignments if they expect to get the best results in the strengthening of their English programs.

And, finally, college and university English departments unquestionably will have to reevaluate their teacher-training. Beyond the established requirements for the major, special consideration should be given to full-year courses in the teaching of elementary and secondary English studies, these to be directed by members of the English staffs. Manifestly, the instructors who take charge of these courses might well spend at least a year in the firsthand study of the public

school programs (this practice is by no means universal) in order thoroughly to acquaint themselves with the teaching problems at the different grade levels.

If all three of these aspects of the English program are given proper attention, administrators and teachers will have gone a long way toward satisfying their critics, severest of whom are often the college freshmen. But every student who attends our public schools should be given every possible opportunity to make of himself an articulate citizen, capable of using as well as of understanding his language.

Turnabout

Professor! I must humbly interfere
With this dramatic cloak and dagger view
Of *Don Quixote*, in the guise which you
Have brought to life this courtly atmosphere
Of old. I praise those sixty years and two
Which mark your learning and which somehow, too,
Have forced me to repeat the course this year,
And yet—I beg your pardon—but I must
Cross swords with you, though forty years your youth,
And, raising *Sancho Panza* from the dust,
Remind you of this day and age, forsooth.
For, I repeat again, my cause is just:
It's fifty minutes after ten—
Hey, fellers, 'taint the truth?

ROBERT F. PANARA

GALLAUDET COLLEGE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Round Table

OTHER THOUGHTS ON "ENGLISH A"

Mr. Stephen Horton in "Some Thoughts on the Passing of English A at Harvard" (*College English*, December, 1951) says many things that I agree with. His excoriation of pedantry, his deprecation of too great emphasis on the more difficult modern poets, even his suggested exploration of the cultural possibilities of TV, are in my judgment very much to the point. His conclusion that "we must vitally unify the new media, the current mores, and the past tradition" seems to me admirable. I would only question his initial assumption that the abandonment by Harvard of "freshman composition," which is undoubtedly a sign of the times, is necessarily a bad sign. There is much to be said for combining the practice of composition at the freshman level with some "subject-matter course."

Mr. Horton's article of course makes clear his awareness that composition, although to some extent a "skill course," cannot be taught in a vacuum. But I think he is too ready to doubt that something like the Harvard plan may be a valid alternative to the maintenance of "freshman English" as a separate course, even though vitalized by the "new media" of culture.

At Alfred University, for instance, I participated in a course which combined the traditional "freshman composition" with the traditional "history of Western civilization." The setup was too complicated to discuss in detail here (and would have been a little more so in a larger university), but some of the central features may be mentioned. First, there was a "permanent panel" of teachers drawn from the English and the social science departments, aided from time to time by "guest lecturers." This panel met for about two hours each week to plan the lecture series, to make out quizzes

and examinations, and in general to discuss the work of the course as a whole. In this way a considerable degree of real "integration" was achieved.

Second, class time was divided between lectures given to the whole group of from 150 to 200 and section meetings of about 25 students for quiz and discussion. Each member of the panel had a discussion section.

Third, one of the section meetings each week was devoted exclusively to a discussion of themes, which were written on topics connected with the lectures and the text assignments. These themes involved the writing of an average of 400 to 500 words a week, mostly exposition. In addition to the prepared themes, two hour-tests each semester, as well as half the final examination, were treated as class themes. Each consisted of a broad discussion question covering some phase of the subject matter of the course and was graded for correctness of style and clarity of organization as well as for mastery of fact.

Fourth, the subject matter of the course might be described as "the cultural history of western Europe." Wars and dynasties were played down; ideas, art, and ways of living were played up. And instead of being a "survey" and trying to say something about everything, the course concentrated on what seemed to be "key periods." For instance, a month was spent on the civilization of Athens in the fifth century B.C., while the Roman period (this would shock some historians) was skipped entirely. Students got a real taste of Plato, Sophocles, and Thucydides. A history text was used, and also an anthology of world literature, which was later replaced by the inexpensive paperback volumes in which most of "the great books" are now available.

The course seemed to me, considering the

special and local as well as the general problems with which the staff was confronted, to be extraordinarily successful. Almost all the members of the panel were enthusiastic. Students complained at the beginning of the year about the difficulty of the course and the alleged injustice of not being given separate grades for "English" and "history"; but later they seemed genuinely to enjoy it (relatively and generally speaking, of course; for I do not suppose that the learning process is ever wholly delightful, nor can I imagine that the business of learning to write can ever be anything but arduous if not actually painful); and apparently they looked back to it, afterward, with a degree of fondness and even a sort of pride. Such writing skill as they acquired was, as far as I could see, not less than freshmen acquired under the traditional system; and complaints from other departments about student illiteracy certainly did not increase.

I think we should recognize that the problem of freshman composition can be met with equal success in various ways. What is really important (here again I am sure that Mr. Horton and I are in full agreement) is not some particular program but a staff dedicated to teaching and hospitable to new ideas and fresh approaches.

ELLSWORTH BARNARD

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DUBIETIES

Why do editors and writers in professional English journals give so much time to the search for examples in literature of the use of forms and constructions that are characteristic of the more careless, imprecise, indiscriminating colloquial speech and make no attempt to compare the number of these with the number of those that are in accord with principles set forth in the best textbooks for the encouragement of clear, logical, and discriminating expression? If Dickens commits an average of one error to every thirty words, what does the count for Pater, De Quincey, and

Thackeray, or for Howells, James, and Lewis show? What should be done as a result of these comparative scores? Should the one showing the greatest number of aberrations or deviations from what is generally regarded as standard usage be on that account held up to aspirants to literary competence as the best model? Are such errors commendable, or are there compensations that offset them? Is there any virtue in a general principle of harmony, concord, or parallelism? Is *everybody*, for example, singular or plural in meaning, or is it sometimes singular and sometimes plural? If it is sometimes plural, is it ever all right to say *Everybody are present*? Is it all right to say *Every one of the students were present*? Is *Everybody must do their best* unobjectionable? Is *everybody* singular and *their* plural? Are they both singular, or are they both plural? Should both words be regarded as having the same number? Or are such questions so foolish that they should never be raised? Should there be more emphasis on levels of speech and the forms appropriate to the different levels? Should form take priority over meaning, or should meaning, both in oral and in written speech, take priority over form? Is "descriptive" grammar preferable in every instance to "prescriptive" grammar? Is current usage, even usage by many reputable writers, always distinguished by clarity and logic? Is such usage unimpeachable in every aspect of language? Should teachers of English adopt as a slogan the dictum that "whatever is, is right"? Is there any good reason for considering meaning in determining whether a pronoun or a verb should agree with one or another substantive?

The last question propounded above suggests that Russell Thomas in his article on "Concord of the Verb in Relative Clauses after *One Of*" might have considered meaning as he did in the footnote concerning the agreement of indefinite pronouns and other pronouns: "When the meaning of one of these indefinite pronouns is logically plural, the pronoun is considered to be plural, and when this pronoun is referred to by another

pronoun, the second pronoun may be plural" (*College English*, October, 1951, p. 43).

Jones in *Practical English Composition, Third Edition* (p. 136), indicates that meaning is the criterion and uses the following sentences to illustrate:

She is one of those girls who are always late.

He is one of the men who is more honest than the rest.

T. M. PEARSON

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Tahlequah, Oklahoma

WHICH TWIN-POEM IS THE TONI?

As one stage in the process of helping freshmen gain critical sensitivity in their experiences with poems, I find that the challenge of two alternate versions of one lyric is stimulating and entertaining to the most jaded student. Which twin is the Toni?

Though poets' own revisions of certain lines or stanzas (as in Keats's "La belle dame sans merci" and Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," etc.) supply intriguing nuggets for comparison, poets have rarely provided us with complete alternate versions of their poems. Hostile or humorous parodies of well-known poems have their own function but rarely permit line-by-line parallels with the original targets; in any case, no guessing contest is possible, since parodies are "dead giveaways."

Passing out mimeographed sheets reproducing in double-column two line-for-line parallel versions of a poem, unsigned, I demand of my students, "Which twin is the Toni?" Either through oral discussion or by means of a written critique the student registers his decision and the concrete reasons supporting it. Though sufficiently similar in subject matter, metrics, and rhyme-pattern to the original, the ersatz version is dulled and emasculated enough in imagery and diction to guarantee that a poetically alert student will pounce on the genuine specimen. Any student misled by superficial reading

ease or lulled by Eddie Guestimentality can be shown specifically how his criteria were unworthy.

Here, for example, is an ersatz version of John Masefield's sonnet, "On Growing Old":

THE ONSET OF AGE

I call thee, Beauty, for my years are flying;
My life is over, and I'm old for roving.
A man whose passions young once set him sigh-
ing
At length grows grey, with heart too tired for
loving.
I think of memories beside the fire,
Of years gone by; the ticking clock reminds me
My moments yet are few; I may expire
Like ghostly shadows in the room behind me.
Oh Beauty, in pursuit of you to wander
Is now forbidden me; there's naught but dream-
ing
Of how I used to share the struggle yonder
To bridge the current wide of Life's far stream-
ing.
Now I must sit within my quiet cage:
Youth's verve recalled by tremulous old age.

A. E. Housman's memorable Shropshire poem, "Reveille," may be matched line-for-line with this sterile version:

BUGLE AT SUNRISE

Rise up, lad: the sunrise burning
Gilds the east horizon rims,
And the morning clouds returning
Catch the light that from it brims.
Waken, for the shadows broken
Melt away on either hand
And of night the final token
Disappears from sunlit land.
Up, boy, up, it's late for sleeping;
Hear the morning's robins cheep,
"Hark, for you the highway's keeping
Room to climb the hills so steep."
Other regions beckon yonder,
Potent futures to you call;
All too short the life you squander,
Unrepentant prodigal!
Waken, friend; a lazy body
Basking under sun won't thrive;
Morning slumber is a shoddy
Substitute for being Alive!

Flesh is weak but heart is steady;
 Not for aye will your blood leap.
 Wake, then: Death with scythe is ready
 All too soon your life to reap.

Finally, a chance to enjoy more acutely Miss Dickinson's "I like to see it lap the miles" (which may need a masthead such as "The Railway Train" to balance against the parallel version's title) will be afforded by comparison with this de-Emilyized per-version:

MOUNTAIN EXPRESS

I love to watch the railway train
 Go steaming through the gorge,
 Pause briefly for its watering,
 And then round hillsides forge

A path resistless, roaring;
 Then, conscious of its powers,
 Pass rows of squalid shanties;
 And then between the towers

Of quarry walls ascending,
 Pound up the slanting rail,
 With steam from pistons puffing;
 Then coast the downward trail,

Its whistle shouting triumph;
 And, perfectly on time,
 Pull up to its own station
 In mechanism sublime

Incidentally, has anyone previously raised the question of whether or not Emily in writing her lyric subconsciously recalled the following passage from chapter iv of Charles Dickens' *American Notes*—which embodies startling parallels to the imagery, diction, and general breathlessness of her verses on the train? I quote the relevant lines herewith:

On it whirls headlong, dives through the woods again, emerges in the light, clatters over frail arches, rumbles upon the heavy ground, shoots beneath a wooden bridge which intercepts the light for a second like a wink, suddenly awakens all the slumbering echoes in the main street of a large town, and dashes on haphazard, pell-mell, neck or nothing, down the middle of the road. There . . . on—on, on—tears the mad dragon of an engine with its train of cars; scattering in all directions a shower of burning sparks from its wood fire; screeching, hissing, yelling, panting; until at last the thirsty

monster stops beneath a covered way to drink, the people cluster round, and you have time to breathe again.

BEN W. FUSON

PARK COLLEGE
 PARKVILLE, MISSOURI

UNDERGRADUATE WORKSHOPS IN CREATIVE WRITING

Students like variety in their classroom activities. Since neither traditional lecture methods on creative writing nor reading themes aloud and criticizing them sufficiently develops their critical abilities, I have experimented with various types of workshops that require the whole class to work individually but simultaneously on similar problems. I have found three types of laboratory activities that they enjoy and benefit from immensely.

The first type of workshop activity is in theme correction. I distribute the nameless but code-numbered (I know each student's code number) themes of one class to another. The students come to the workshop period with colored pencils and grammar books; I supply a few dictionaries. They spend the entire period correcting one theme, marking it as if they were the instructor with marginal notes, a grade, and a critical paragraph at the end of the theme. If a sentence does not "sound" correct to them but they do not know why, they ask me for help. I circulate around the classroom to help them in articulating on paper what they feel is awkwardly worded. At the end of the period, they sign their names to the themes and hand them in to me. I correct both the theme and the student-critic's comments. At the next class meeting I return the theme first to the student-critic before returning it to the author. The student-critic is then able to see how accurate he was in his appraisal, how my grade concurs with his, and what standards are used in appraising his own themes.

When I first began this type of workshop, I gave the superior students the poor students' themes and vice versa because I

thought that the superior students would be keen and helpful in their criticisms, while the poor students would profit from reading well-written themes. How mistaken I was! The superior students, on the whole, were too generous, chalking all errors up to momentary carelessness in proofreading. The poor students thought that the diction was too abstract, the sentence structure too involved, and the subject matter too full of deadwood! They failed to appreciate their fellow-students' maturity just as they failed to appreciate the maturity of expression and ideas of the great writers whom they were reading in the course. Thus I have found it best to distribute the themes without plan; over a period of time, everyone will eventually have an opportunity to criticize various qualities of themes.

The second type of workshop activity is in building a short story. In order to stress that most short stories are not written backward, i.e., from the surprise climax, I assign first a room or place to be described in a hundred words or less. The students write this at home, bring it to class, and exchange it with their neighbor for criticism. When it is returned to them, they may revise according to their neighbor's criticism. They keep the description. Next, I assign a description of a character in a hundred words or less which they treat in the same manner as the first assignment. Last of all, I assign a situation which they are to weave into the two descriptions of setting and character and develop into a short story. After I correct the completed story, I return it to the writer, who in turn allows his neighbor, who has corrected the first two descriptions, to read it. One example of an intriguing combination that they developed was a modern, middle-class living-room as a place; a nervous man of thirty, dressed in a uniform, as a character; and the decision to desert the Army as a situation. This type of activity helps them in learning how to build carefully all the components in a story and how to revise as they go along.

The third type of workshop activity is in studying the revisions and holographs of

famous literary works. The class compares and contrasts all revisions, word for word, and analyzes whether the final revision effects more force, more clarity, or more conciseness than the original draft. Much of this class discussion borders on hypothetical speculation about the author's intention. This may seem like a waste of time at first, but it actually induces stimulating discussions and better appreciation of the improvements which the revisions achieve.

Here are some works that I have used in this type of workshop: (1) The 1597 and 1625 versions of Francis Bacon's essays. Although four versions, written over a period of twenty-eight years, are available, I prefer to use the first and last ones. They illustrate how, in 1597, he wrote the bare facts about his subject matter and how later, in 1625, he expanded the bare facts by use of the inductive method and such literary devices as figures of speech, balanced and antithetical sentence structure, and illustrations. (2) The rough drafts of the Declaration of Independence.¹ I use Thomas Jefferson's "fair copy" because it is similar to both the final copy, which most of the students remember, and to the early draft by John Adams. Instead of being a repetition of a verbalism that they had learned in grammar school, the Declaration draft proved humorous and fascinating. It revealed the Revolutionaries' bitter sarcasm and hatred toward the English king that was later modulated into a calm, dignified disavowal of English rule. (3) The holograph of William Hazlitt's essay, "The Fight."² This is worth while because of his deletion in the final copy of the many digressions that are contained in the holograph. Also, he adds many allusions and figures of speech which aid in making his treatment of boxing lofty at a time when it was regarded as a base, illegal form of athletics. The students enjoy comparing his diction to contemporary sports-writing jargon. (4) A radio

¹ Carl L. Becker, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1942).

² S. C. Wilcox, *Hazlitt in the Workshop* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1943).

speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt's.³ This shows the fireside chat rapport that Roosevelt obtained by his revision of abstract words into short, simple words and his omission of all irrelevant verbiage.

Such workshops compel the students to exercise their critical judgment and imagination, besides offering them a splendid opportunity to understand problems in creative writing from inception to development, expansion, condensation, and, most important of all, revision.

LILA KOSTICK

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AN EMBROIDERY ON DIMMESDALE'S SCARLET LETTER

Hester Prynne so embroidered her scarlet letter that its aspect lost its original harsh outlines, yet it became a richer, truer symbol. In the epilogue to the *Scarlet Letter*, the companion symbol on Dimmesdale's bosom was embroidered almost out of existence, one might say, by Hawthorne himself. Hawthorne's second, rather melodramatic, use of the symbol, and his subsequent array of alternative explanations of its origin, which leave its very existence possibly in doubt, have proved disconcerting to readers of the *Scarlet Letter*. The employment of the "multiple choice" device here, in particular, seems to raise many questions concerning Hawthorne's intention, even his competence: Can he not make up his mind concerning the postulates of his material so that he must, as throughout this work, present a naturalistic explanation for every possible supernatural phenomenon? Does he merely display his pervasive skepticism? Or does he lose his nerve and withdraw from the symbolism once offered because he cannot himself believe in it? All these questions are forms of the same question; all imply uncertainty or inadequacy on Hawthorne's part; all take perhaps too literally Hawthorne's statement that "the reader may choose among these theories." Yet a rather

simple explanation can, I believe, justify this use of the "multiple choice" and rescue Hawthorne from charges of artistic uncertainty, although this explanation rests upon artistic effects and has therefore nothing to say about presumed artistic intentions.

The intimation that a scarlet letter was revealed upon the dying minister's bosom forms an effective climactic moment to the climactic scene—effective because the revelation of the symbol to the reader has shock value comparable to that of the revelation of its significance to the multitude in Salem. This correlative function is justification for the minister's hitherto private symbol. Add to this its value in completing the symmetry of the structure and the overtones it adds to the middle section of the novel as secondary functions.

Is it possible for a symbol to be too effective, to draw the attention too much to itself and away from its significance? Dimmesdale's scarlet letter runs this danger, first, because it is introduced long after the reader, if not Salem, has known the significance; second, because of its inherent horror. To leave us with the *A* burned into our imagination as into Dimmesdale's bosom would be to leave us with a distorted relation between symbol and significance.

The final chapter corrects this distortion, and the alternative explanations of the origin of Dimmesdale's scarlet letter play a crucial role in this correction. Let us note them and the order in which they occur, and ask whether it is true, as Hawthorne states, that the reader may choose among them. The alternatives are all conjectures. The first is that Dimmesdale began carving the scarlet letter on his bosom as a penance the day Hester began to wear hers. The second is that much later Chillingworth caused it to appear by magic and drugs. The third is that the scarlet letter was the visible manifestation of "the ever-active tooth of remorse, gnawing from the inmost heart outwardly." The first conjecture is completely and literally plausible. We know that the minister has inflicted physical torture upon himself as a penance. We know that this form of penance, actually an act

³ Porter G. Perrin, *Writer's Guide and Index to English* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1942), p. 303.

of hypocrisy unless revealed, is comparable to other acts—his self-accusations in sermons, his midnight vigil—all of which deepen his hypocrisy. The remaining conjectures, on the other hand, present difficulties. To believe that Chillingworth caused the appearance of the letter by medical or magical machinations would be to ignore the ecstasy and wonder with which he first viewed the minister's bosom at the moment when his suspicions were confirmed as well as to accept the idea of necromantic powers. To believe that the letter was a psychosomatic outgrowth would be to accept a semisupernatural conjecture which Hawthorne consistently refuses to indorse throughout the work—he always leaves a completely naturalistic hypothesis available. The final alternative, the suggestion that no letter existed, is even less acceptable, because it is offered only by witnesses who refuse to believe what the reader knows to be true—that the minister is guilty.

If only the first alternative is completely acceptable, what is the function of the others? Together they serve to submerge the symbol within its significance, to bring the attention back to Dimmesdale's guilt and its consequences. If the order of the alternatives is one of decreasing plausibility, it is also one of increasing symbolic importance. The first conjecture, that the letter resulted from self-inflicted penance, enforces the idea that the sin in Dimmesdale was always compounded by the very intensity of his remorse. Even here we are reminded forcibly of what underlies the phenomenon. The second, that Chillingworth caused its growth, though literally implausible, does remind us of the role of the leech as agent of the minister's agony: the doctor kept his conscience lacerated to a degree paralleling the rawness of the flesh. The symbol is further submerged by the third suggestion, that the letter was a physical manifestation of a spiritual disease; this again stresses the key idea behind the whole climax of the story. After reading these alternatives we can in one sense be free to choose among them: choice is by now unimportant. They all indicate the super-

ficiality of any interest in the symbol itself; they all underline the nature and importance of its spiritual counterpart. At this point in his narrative Hawthorne states: "We have thrown all the light we could acquire upon the portent, and would gladly, now that it has done its office erase its deep print out of our own brain, where long meditation has fixed it in undesirable distinctness." At the end of the revelation scene the portent itself was undesirably distinct to the reader; by the time this statement appears, the distinctness is of what it portends, not of its appearance. Nevertheless having intimated that he would get rid of the physical symbol, Hawthorne does so, in the testimony of those who refuse to believe in the minister's guilt, who believe that the minister's final act stemmed from his pious desire "to express to the world how utterly nugatory is the choicest of man's own righteousness," and who deny the existence of the symbol as well. This alternative is important, not because it casts any real doubt on the existence of the symbol, but because it brings out the ultimate significance of the revelation scene: Dimmesdale's original sin had become so thoroughly compounded with hypocrisy that all his seeming revelations and gestures have undermined the efficacy of his true revelation. His final act can be seen according to the pattern of his previous gestures. How apt it is, then, that the final alternative should lead directly to the explicit moral: "Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!" Hawthorne's embroidery upon Dimmesdale's scarlet letter, far from indicating artistic uncertainty, is a simple yet subtle device for leading the attention away from the "undesirable distinctness" of the symbol and back to basic issues.

DAVID M. STOCKING

BELOIT COLLEGE

THE MEANING OF "THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL"

Students of Hawthorne's short stories have differed widely in their interpretations

of "The Minister's Black Veil." Austin Warren and Leland Schubert attribute to the minister some unnamed crime. This "crime of dark dye," as he calls it, Edgar Allan Poe connects with the young woman whose funeral the Reverend Mr. Hooper conducted on the day he first donned the dark veil. For this interpretation there is some support in three features of the tale: (1) in Hawthorne's suggestion that the minister feared the glance of the dead girl; (2) in the circulated report that, as Hooper had stooped over the coffin and, in so doing, had disclosed his face, "the corpse had slightly shuddered"; (3) the remark of a woman in the funeral procession that "the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand." Richard Harter Fogle (*New England Quarterly*, September, 1948) seems to agree with Warren, Schubert, and Poe that the veil is "a penance for an actual and serious crime," at which Hawthorne is content to merely hint. Nevertheless, Fogle considers the minister's donning of the veil as the somewhat capricious, unwarranted act of a perversely proud and eccentric preacher, so tragically obsessed with sin that he can no longer perceive the normal and the good aspects of human life.

On the other hand, Newton Arvin and Randall Stewart hold that the veil has no reference to any particular crime or sin on the part of the minister. Carl Van Doren, who agrees with Arvin and Stewart, goes so far as to call Hooper "a virtuous egotist," while his brother Mark is content to see in the veil an obscure symbol of some hidden mystery. The little light that Hawthorne himself has thrown on the meaning of the veil in the form of a footnote favors the interpretation of Arvin, Stewart, and Carl Van Doren, for Hawthorne suggests that the minister was not the victim of shame and remorse like that of one Joseph Moody of York, Maine, who, after he had accidentally killed one of his beloved friends, thereafter hid his face from his fellow-men.

But there is another possible interpretation of the minister's strange and tragic act, an interpretation that no one of the special students of Hawthorne has mentioned.

Hooper's conduct may not have been capricious, arbitrary, and unbased, as Fogle has suggested. Perhaps the godly preacher is simply resorting to the ancient Hebrew prophets' practice of using striking symbolic acts as means of appealing to hardened sinners who had turned a deaf ear to their words. Thus Jeremiah once placed a yoke upon his neck as a sign of the captivity to which the sins of Judah and its neighboring states were dooming themselves. Similarly Ezekiel shaved the hair from his face and his head as a symbol of the approaching death or dispersal of the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem. And Hosea went so far as to marry a prostitute, whose sexual promiscuity typified the unfaithfulness of Judah and Israel to Jehovah, whereas the names given to the children who issued from this marriage symbolized Jehovah's repudiation of the Jews and their impending defeat in battle.

Like the symbolic acts of the Hebrew prophets, Hooper's wearing of the black veil lent strange power to his warnings to callous sinners, even though he, like the ancient prophets, had to pay for this power the costly price of misunderstanding, loneliness, and agony of soul. This prolonged suffering, which constitutes the body of the story, Hawthorne depicts dramatically and climactically with sure and telling art.

That Hawthorne knew the Old Testament in general and the prophets in particular is evident to any careful reader of *The Scarlet Letter*. In chapter xx he refers to the "rich old Hebrew" of the Old Testament; three chapters later he likens Dimmesdale to the Hebrew prophets who were "mightily constrained" to deliver their denunciations of sin and irreligion. It is not improbable, therefore, that he conceived of Hooper as a New England counterpart of the ancient spokesmen of Jehovah who were constrained to resort, at the cost of their own happiness, to symbolic acts that would be more effective than words in shocking heedless sinners into repentance.

GILBERT P. VOIGT

NEWBERRY COLLEGE

Report and Summary

CANDIDATES FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH ADVISERS

The College Section Nominating Committee presents fourteen candidates for *College English* advisers, seven to be elected by a mail ballot in May for two-year terms.

Fiction: OSCAR CARGHILL, Washington Square College; H. BLAIR ROUSE, Emory University

Renaissance: RUDOLF B. GOTTFRIED, Indiana University; VERNON HALL, JR., Dartmouth College

Communication: CLARK EMERY, University of Miami; HAROLD B. ALLEN, University of Minnesota

World Literature: ERNEST C. HASSOLD, University of Louisville; MARVIN T. HERRICK, University of Illinois

Teaching of Literature: NEAL CROSS, Colorado State College of Education; M. AGNELLA GUNN, Boston University

Poetry: MARTIN S. SHOCKLEY, North Texas State College; HENRY W. WELLS, Columbia University

Curriculum: WRIGHT THOMAS, State University of New York, State Teachers College at Cortland; HARRY R. WARFEL, University of Florida

A QUALIFIED VICTORY HAS BEEN won by the faculty of Ohio State University in obtaining a modification of the "gag rule" which went into effect last September when the university's board of trustees instructed the president to "screen" all speakers before they appeared at the university. The new regulations were worked out through joint trustee-faculty conferences. Benjamin Fine reports in the *New York Times* that the modified rule has this provision: "The responsibility for initiating an invitation to an individual to speak on the campus or under university auspices and the determination of the fitness of such an individual to speak under such circumstances is now and has always been primarily a faculty responsibility subject to university administrative procedures." A significant part of the statement, the interpretation of which will determine whether peace between the faculty and the trustees is to continue, is this: "That judgments as to what constitutes 'generally accepted standards' will vary with the times and places and, without attempting to de-

fine or limit the phrase, there is general agreement that those who are subversives or those who are allied to them in purpose or action or those whose views do not contribute to the university's educational program are not acceptable as speakers."

"REALISM AND THE INTELLECTUAL in a Time of Crisis," by Helen M. Lynd, in the winter *American Scholar* is pertinent to the problem of each of us as individuals as we take our own positions in the controversy on academic freedom. Dr. Lynd raises this question: "In a time of social turmoil does intelligence demand adaptation to and exploitation of the most patently powerful forces of the time without 'question' or 'debate'?" Can the intellectual not find some course other than "self-defeating utopianism or being 'as the time is'?" Dr. Lynd thinks that a time of social revolution need not be a time of paralysis or defense. She believes that the obligation of the intellectual is "to extend the realism of the immediate, constantly to re-examine events to restore his-

torical range and depth, to avoid the use of activity as an anodyne." The business of the intellectual, she continues, is "to attempt to discover what new forms of human values are coming into being, to try to distinguish the valid from the specious, and to help bring those charged with hope to fulfillment." She admits that exercise of this responsibility is not easy but points out that the honorable tradition of reaffirming independent thought continues. For example, Edward C. Tolman, the noted scientist, and his colleagues, dismissed from the University of California for their insistence on intellectual independence, were supported by professors and professional associations throughout the country. And Yale, the same Yale, by the way, about which William Buckley recently has been writing such fiery dithyrambs, last June conferred the degree of Doctor of Science upon Tolman as "valiant defender of the human mind."

WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY'S experiment in teaching courses on television for credit proved so successful last semester that the program of offerings is being expanded, and the presentations have been stepped up from five to six days a week. Two full-credit courses, one on comparative literature and one on introductory psychology, were offered during the fall. A total of 747 enrolled for the courses; 112 registered for credit and paid the \$16 per credit-hour fee, while 635 took the courses on the noncredit basis by purchasing the syllabi at \$5.00 each. A recent survey indicated a listening audience of more than 50,000 people on 27,500 sets.

FOLKLORISTS WILL ENJOY FRANK Sullivan's brisk little satire on regional research, entitled "Quigley 837," which appears in the *New Yorker* (December 29).

A NEW INTERDEPARTMENTAL course in the contemporary European novel has been introduced into the undergraduate curriculum at Bryn Mawr College as an ex-

periment in the study of contemporary European thought.

PACE COLLEGE (NEW YORK CITY) is now conducting a communication workshop for students who require special instruction in writing, reading, and speaking. If a student is found to be deficient in these skills, he will be required to attend workshop sessions until he has satisfactorily completed the program of work prescribed for him.

A SPECIAL FIVE-YEAR COMBINED liberal arts-engineering program, worked out jointly by Alfred and Columbia universities, will go into effect immediately at Alfred. This combined program permits three years of broad training in liberal arts at Alfred followed by two years of engineering at Columbia.

REED COLLEGE, PORTLAND, OREGON, has reorganized its junior and senior courses in literature. Literature is no longer being presented in historical units but by genres. Courses are offered in the novel, drama, and poetry, and a new senior course in criticism will be added in 1952-53.

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, NEW LONDON, has voted to establish a reading period of six days at the end of each semester, immediately preceding the review period and semester examination schedule. This will provide a "time to read" in which the student may plan her own concentrated study of supplementary course materials.

THE COLLEGE SECTION OF THE National Council of Teachers of English held a dinner program session in connection with the holiday convention of the Modern Language Association in Detroit. Theodore Hornberger, University of Minnesota, chairman of the section, presided. James F. Fullington, Ohio State University, introduced as the speaker his colleague, William A. Charvat. Mr. Charvat's topic was "Professional Schizophrenia." He touched upon the use-

lessness of some research and concluded with a striking proposal for classroom treatment of once-popular writers who do not seem to us to have high aesthetic (in a broad sense) value. The chairman had to halt the ensuing lively discussion, which was encroaching upon the general session of the MLA.

A SPECIALIST IN THE LANGUAGE arts has long been needed in the United States Office of Education. The National Council of Teachers of English has repeatedly urged that such an appointment be made, but congressional limitation of the budget for the Office of Education made any increase of the staff impossible. There were, however, two specialists for the social studies, and, when one of these resigned, a language arts specialist was appointed in her place.

Arno Jewett reported for this duty about the first of the year. He did his doctoral work with Dora V. Smith at the University of Minnesota. His experience includes three years in a junior-senior high school, four years in a four-year high school, and seven years in college training of teachers of English at Arizona State College, Teachers College of Columbia University, and the University of Texas, from which he was taken to Washington. He spent four years in the armed services and later served the State Department in Germany. Well trained, sufficiently experienced, pleasing in personality, and young enough to be both flexible and energetic, Dr. Jewett will be very useful in the advancement of language arts education. His primary concern will be with English in secondary schools, but he will probably deal to some extent with the elementary field also.

THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION Board's experimental essay test last year gave results which encourage the Board to carry the experiment further. There are also hints for teachers' testing of their own students. "The Experiment in General Composition," by Earle G. Eley in the *Col-*

lege Board Review for November, describes the test and its scoring.

Forms A and D were on different topics, and on four of five qualities or phases the scores on A were higher. Forms A and D included some readings on the topics. Form A-I lacked any helps or stimulation; Form D-I had seven provocative questions instead of the readings. Form A was decidedly superior to Form A-I; it produced higher and more consistent scores. Form D-I produced almost as high scores as Form D—higher on style and organization, but lower on mechanics, reasoning, and content. Mr. Eley seems to hint that the readings stimulated memory and reasoning rather than supplied ideas and information which were repeated in the essays.

Instead of a single score for total performance the readers scored each paper for mechanics, style, organization, reasoning, and content. This seems to have decreased disagreement among readers' final reports.

The Board regards this test as supplementary to the objective tests in English rather than as a substitute for them.

FLOYD RINKER'S "WHAT SUCCESS? What Promise?" fills the entire November issue of the *English Leaflet*. It bears the subtitle "... our commemorative ode," and was delivered at the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the New England Association of Teachers of English in Cambridge last April.

On the whole, Mr. Rinker views with alarm the tendency of English courses today to aim at too many ends—to scatter, he says—and so to fail to accomplish the fundamental ones of teaching the language skills; neglect of direct teaching of grammar; omission of drill and general softening of matter and procedure; the inadequate subject-matter scholarship of many teachers, most of which he lays at the door of teachers colleges and schools of education.

Mr. Rinker rightly insists upon the need for cultivated, dynamic teachers, upon the values of great literature, upon the necessity of limitation of the English teacher's "pupil load" and extra-curricular responsibilities.

How we are to get the money for adequate salaries to attract the kind of persons we need, and increase our present number of teachers when we cannot now get even enough seats for pupils or enough teachers of the present modest standards to man our schools, he leaves for another day. And those students utterly unable to profit by the rigorous education he would offer?

"THE ESSENTIALS OF EDUCATION" are discussed in the January *Atlantic* by Sir Richard Livingstone, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The first aim is "to know the first-rate in any subject we study." In what subjects? He admits the necessity of vocational studies but, since we already do pretty well with them, does not discuss them further. Our most important job is living, and today distinguishing the good from the bad is urgent and difficult. One learns what is first-rate by meeting it, and the study in which we meet life and people most fully is literature.

FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSES in twelve Illinois colleges are described in the November *Illinois English Bulletin*. The issue, which should be valuable for several years, articulates what the bewildered high school senior may expect from the school he chooses. Editor Hook emphasizes that it is not intended for the high school teacher to prepare the students for a specific course.

THE AUTUMN ISSUE OF *ENGLISH*, the magazine of the English Association (British), is unusually interesting. E. L. Black's paper, "Research on the Teaching of English," first pleads for wider dissemination of practical conclusions from such research. He then reports two articles from the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* and reviews *Reading in the High School and College*, the forty-seventh yearbook, Part II, of the (American) National Society for the Study of Education. In the *BJEP* for November, 1947, W. J. Macauley found that little grammar studied before fourteen is remembered or understood but that later

it is mastered better. The implication is that maturity is necessary for comprehension of grammatical concepts. (Were they the *same* children? Other explanations might be suggested.) He also seemed to demonstrate that the order of ease in recognition is noun, verb, pronoun, adverb, adjective. Parts of the sentence (e.g., subject, predicate, object) were apparently not considered by Macauley. Testing of his conclusions would make a good thesis project.

H. Earley-Wilmot, in "Write Me a Prologue," argues that Shakespeare did not like prologues: only six of his plays have them, Hamlet says that the prologue "tells all," and Peter Quince quite clearly satirizes the custom. Only when there was special occasion for explanation did Shakespeare use a prologue. Guy Boas, discussing "'Tamburlaine' and the Horrific," finds the play as staged recently at the Old Vic revolting because of the amount of violence (sadistic?) and its physical presence on the stage instead of Aristotelian reports of its enactment offstage.

"CINNAMON, NUTMEG, AND GINGER" is the main title of an address given by J. N. Hook to the English Teachers Club of Indianapolis and published in the *Illinois English Bulletin* for December. The subtitle is "Variety in the Teaching of English," and, because the article really lives up to this subtitle, it is not possible to offer any satisfying précis. Its twelve spicy pages and the list of "A Thousand Topics for Composition: Revised" which fills the rest of the magazine are well worth the quarter you must send with your order for it to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois.

THE GENERAL SEMANTICS VIEW OF "Symbolic Processes in Personality Development" is presented in *Etc.: A Review of General Semantics* for autumn by Wendell Johnson. He begins with the indubitable fact that our language conditions, partly determines, our thinking; as he says, "to a significant degree our language does our think-

ing for us." He distinguishes three levels of linguistic sophistication. Some unreflective persons accept what teacher, priest, or newspaper relay as they understand it, and act upon it. These *may* be fortunately directed, but they are not self-directed. Some less linguistically naïve know such words as *motive*, *drive*, the *unconscious*, and are to some extent critical of statements of other people or their own; but they are only partly masters rather than slaves of language. His third group have "a richly developed language for talking about language" and are able to judge "statements of relatively great generalization—on relatively high levels of abstraction."

The practical question, Johnson says, is

the extent to which the individual learns to cultivate such control "over his symbolic processes and corresponding evaluative reactions." Such control is learned only by practicing it. Johnson would have the child trained to ask of would-be informers and advisers, "What do you mean? How do you know?" Exasperating sometimes, of course, but the only way for the child to become an independent thinker. Johnson distinguishes four kinds of meaning, from synonyms to readiness to act on the basis of the statement. One *knows*, the semanticists say, only on the basis of securing and weighing honestly all available pertinent facts. (Here we have arrived at the application of scientific method to the everyday concerns of life.)

About Literature

PAR LAGERKVIST, WHOSE POSITION among Scandinavians is almost Olympian, was scarcely heard of in the United States before the announcement that he was the 1951 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. A spate of journalistic biographies followed immediately, but, since Lagerkvist is a genuine recluse, these all carried about the same bare facts. Two articles, however, which combine biography with some evaluation of his literary accomplishments are Richard B. Vowles's "Par Lagerkvist: Dramatist of the Soul" (*Saturday Review of Literature*, December 1) and Hervey Breit's "The Nobel Prize Winner" (*New York Times Magazine*, November 25). Vowles discusses his work as poet, novelist, essayist, and dramatist. Since Lagerkvist has thirty-five books to his credit, only the major ones in each category are analyzed. Vowles concludes that Lagerkvist is a "giant of modern classicism." Breit stresses that Lagerkvist is considered unique in his native Sweden because, instead of being concerned with the national background, manners, and folklore, Lagerkvist stands out as an intellectual, as a writer primarily concerned with the universal questions of art and religion. That his novel *Barabbas* is becoming better known to

American readers is evident from a recent note of Bennett Cerf, president of Random House, which published an English translation of that novel last October 5. Cerf reports that between that date and the announcement of the prize, Random House had sold just 3,500 copies of *Barabbas*. In the three days immediately following the announcement, Random received orders for 1,600 additional copies.

THE WORK OF ANOTHER NOBEL prize winner, William Faulkner, is discussed by Cleanth Brooks in the autumn *Sewanee Review*. Brooks is concerned primarily with the novel *Absalom, Absalom!*, which he considers to be Faulkner's greatest and the one probably the least understood. Brooks's reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* turns on the definition of innocence. He thinks that, if the reader is really to comprehend that novel's tragedy, it is first necessary to understand the particular quality of innocence possessed by its main character, Sutpen. According to Brooks, Sutpen's innocence is of a kind especially characteristic of modern man and one that flourishes particularly in a secularized society. The only people in Faulkner who are "innocent," he says, are

adult males, and their innocence "comes down finally to a trust in rationality—an overweening confidence that plans work out—that life is simpler than it is." Perhaps the greatest compliment we can pay to Faulkner, says Brooks, is to recognize his ability to create a character of heroic proportion and to invest his downfall with something like tragic dignity.

A RECENT "REVOLUTION IN BRITISH Reading" is reported by Angus Wilson in the December *American Mercury*. English readers are reading—and liking—contemporary American fiction better than that written by their countrymen! An English reader today, says Wilson, accepts an American setting in the background of his weekly books from the local library almost as easily as he does an American setting in his weekly film at the local cinema. He attributes this to the fact that the English middle classes—who are the fiction readers—are committed to life, whereas contemporary English fiction is not. Rather its key theme since the war has been nostalgia—nostalgia for pre-Labour-government days. This is especially true of the older novelists, and the best of the younger writers have given up any attempt to relate their work to the wider world of their readers' past or present. The attraction of American novels is that, although they may be bitter or complaining, the content is youthful, alive, and looking to the future. Wilson thinks nothing better illustrates the living content of the modern American novel than Tennessee Williams' *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, and he thinks the two American novels which in scope and treatment go much beyond anything attempted in Britain are Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Lionel Trilling's *Middle of the Journey*.

DEVOTEES OF POETRY SHOULD NOT miss "Technique and Inspiration: A Year of Poetry," by Peter Viereck in the January *Atlantic*. Viereck's highest praise is for Yeats's *Collected Poems* and Theodore Roethke's *Praise to the End*. He also strongly

commends Richard Wilbur's *Ceremony*, Auden's *Nones*, Robert Lowell's *The Mills of the Kavanagh*s, and some pieces of Randall Jarrell in his *The Seven-League Crutches*. He fills out the picture by citing a book about contemporary poets, an anthology, and some poetical translations.

PLAGIARISM AND SCHOLARSHIP—where are the boundaries drawn and is there more than civil law to define them? Edward Dahlberg presents a strong case against Newton Arvin's *Herman Melville* ("American Men of Letters Series"; Sloane, \$4), in the December 17 *Freeman*. Dahlberg charges, with numerous citations of evidence, that Arvin dipped generously and deep into a similar Melville study of many years previous by Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael*. The magazine devotes over a page to excerpts from the two works set side by side. Dahlberg's main thesis is that the dust of the criticism pioneers is robbed to supply newer, less scholarly writers with lucrative substance—without even a nod of acknowledgment.

WHEN MALCOLM COWLEY discussed the fluctuating values on our literary stock exchange at the Cincinnati convention, the current market quotation he gave for the works of James Branch Cabell was not high. In the December *American Mercury* Cabell returns to the pages of the magazine in which, with H. L. Mencken, he first achieved fame, to write with benign humor on "How They Buried Me Alive." This is not an essay but rather pages from a writer's notebook on the travails of authorship and on what Cabell thinks of reviewers and hack-writers, and of posterity as a writer's audience. He stresses that he himself *has* to write, that he *enjoys* writing, regardless of whether or not the work is published and regardless of what readers think of it if it is. In this he documents the recent ruminations of Bernard DeVoto, who devotes his column "The Easy Chair" in January *Harper's* to maintaining that good writers are going

to write, regardless, and that subsidies to writers are for the most part ineffectual and even dangerous.

HARRY SCHERMAN, PRESIDENT OF the Book-of-the-Month Club, discusses "The Bookseller and the Book Club" in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (December 8). He presents a rounded analysis of the problems of book publishing and distribution, with special emphasis on the book clubs and the booksellers. His main points are that no person inclined to read books ever begins to read as many as he intends to, that the intending buyers of practically every book published far outnumber the final actual buyers, that the book clubs were founded to catch the intending buyer while his intention was still hot by making the books quickly and easily accessible, and that the chain grocery stores, drug stores, dime stores, and department stores which display books act on the same principle. Scherman does not think the book clubs or these other outlets hurt the retail bookseller. He thinks they just soak up the demand of the intending buyer, and, by stimulating book buying and reading, actually tend to increase rather than decrease sales in bookstores.

SOME INTERESTING "OBSERVATIONS on the Style of Ernest Hemingway" are contributed by Harry Levin to the autumn *Kenyon Review*. Levin quotes Archibald MacLeish as having said that Hemingway "whittled a style for his time," and, since Hemingway has influenced so many other writers, Levin thinks it is time his prose received technical scrutiny. He examines it carefully throughout the range of the works and analyzes individual passages in great detail. The most important characteristics which emerge are these: Hemingway is an essentially American writer who sets the bulk of his work against foreign backgrounds; his literary vocabulary, with a few foreign and technical exceptions, consists of relatively short and few words which he uses very hard; his verb usage supports C. K. Ogden's argument that verb forms are dis-

appearing from English grammar; Hemingway could get along on the so-called "operators" of Basic English, the sixteen monosyllabic verbs which stem from the movements of the body; and his syntax is informal to the point of fluidity, simplifying as far as possible the already simple system of English inflections. The effectiveness of Hemingway's method depends very largely on his keen ear for speech and his exploring eye for incidental detail. His punch comes from his "sequence of motion and fact," whereby he puts emphasis on nouns and strings them along by means of conjunctions to approximate actual flow of experience. Levin thinks that the paradox of toughness and sensibility of Hemingway's style is resolved, and the qualities and defects of his writing reconciled, if we remember that he was and still is by vocation a poet rather than a novelist; he is less concerned with human relations than with his own relationship to the universe. Finally, Levin thinks, his talents come out most fully in the texture of his work, whereas the structure tends to be episodic and uncontrived to the point of formlessness.

A BRIEF DISCOURSE ON EZRA Pound found its way into the December *Poetry* under the disguise of a book review. Dudley Fitts races through the multidimensional poet, stopping only briefly at the Translator of Chinese, who made glaring errors in finding words for German and Latin as well; the anti-Semitist, who raved on about Jew York and President Rosenfelt; and the homespun "Uncle Ez," who broadcast bitter nothings in a ridiculously postured "Ioway" twang from the shores of Il Duce's *mare nostrum*. The piece manages to say something pleasant about *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, edited by D. D. Paige for Harcourt, closing with the prediction that what is true in Pound seems likely to last "Till change hath broken down / All things save Beauty alone."

"THE POET AS HERO: THE LETTERS of John Keats" is an enthusiastic essay by Lionel Trilling in the autumn *Cornhill Mag-*

azine. Because of his letters, Trilling says, it is impossible to think of Keats as only a poet. Once we have read his letters, we think of him as someone even more interesting than a poet, as a man who is a hero. Being a poet was Keats's chosen way of being a man, says Trilling. He had a clear knowledge of the reality of evil and the reality of self. Because of this he stands "as a last image of health at the very moment when the sickness of Europe began to be apparent." Another enthusiastic reader of Keats's letters is the poet W. H. Auden, who contributes an essay-review of them to the current issue of the *Partisan Review*.

A NEW READING OF *THE SCARLET Letter*, by Rudolph Von Abele, appears in the autumn *Accent*. His interpretation rests mainly on the thesis that Hawthorne is not so much concerned with the Puritan concept of sin as with the dilemma, peculiar to a theology founded upon an authoritarian notion of deity, of how the elite (the "elect") may be reliably distinguished from the masses (the "unregenerate") in the absence of any

unequivocal labels. Looked at in this perspective, says Von Abele, the novel becomes a study in the ironies implicit in such a world.

THAT SHAKESPEARE'S GAY COMEDY is fundamentally saturnalian rather than satiric is the point of C. L. Barbour's "The Saturnalian Pattern in Shakespeare's Comedy" in the autumn *Sewanee Review*. Barbour discusses several of the comedies to show that they dramatize pleasure as a release from normal limitations and that the judgments implicit in the humor primarily concern the relation between man and nature, not the relations between social classes or types. Barbour thinks that the plays give form "to feeling and knowledge by a movement which can be summarized in the formula: *through release to clarification*." This pattern for organizing experience came to Shakespeare from many sources. Barbour examines the plays particularly in relation to the social rituals of Elizabethan holidays and turns up much of interest to illustrate his point.

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THE WORLD THROUGH LITERATURE. (English Monograph 18 of the National Council.) New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951. Pp. 506. \$3.75.

The World through Literature is a co-operative work, a collection of essays on thirteen great literatures by a number of American professors. It is one of several works planned by the late Arthur E. Christy when he was the first chairman of the Council's committee on comparative literature. Like the others (a volume of readings in world literature and a volume of bibliography), this work is meant to widen the horizon of students and teachers of literature. Obviously a collection of encyclopedia articles would not have served the purpose, which was to reveal the distinctive qualities and the special contributions of the major literatures. Moreover, Dr. Joseph T. Shipley's *Encyclopedia of Literature* already exists to supply a series of expert informative articles on the literatures from Akkadian to Yugoslav. The role of the present volume is to be simple and to be striking, to present ideas before facts, to point rather than to lead the way.

The work is difficult to judge, both because the sixteen authors do not always march in step and even more because the striking power of a given article may well increase with the ignorance of the reader. The Asiatic literatures, from Japan to Palestine, may for the latter reason sound more interesting here, especially the Chinese, which Shao Chang Lee has made deceptively pellucid, and the Hebrew, which Eisig Silberschlag has made straightforward. Praise must be given to Edward Jurji for the scope of his article on Arabic, which he extends to Turkish, Persian, and even Urdu. The articles on Japanese, Indian (really limited to Sanskrit), and the Koran are likewise excellent for their purpose.

Readers may be more captious in judging the more familiar European literatures. One reader finds Giuseppe Prezzolini's Italian lucid, the late Rudolph Schevill's Spanish thoughtful,

Madaline W. Nichols' Latin-American informative; but German, French, Russian, and Scandinavian are all authoritative, and Allen R. Benham's Classical is clear-cut in its limitation to literary theory. Most readers will be most impressed by Paul Radin's Primitive Literature, which opens new worlds of literature to explorers. The editor, Charlton Laird, has striking and pertinent things of his own to say, and his introductions are graceful. The work is altogether a persuasive first step toward acquaintance with world literature and should be useful to us all.

GEORGE B. PARKS

QUEENS COLLEGE

THE ENGLISH PAST. By A. L. ROWSE. Macmillan. Pp. 245. \$3.75.

Twelve informal essays in which Mr. Rowse exercises his great gift of historical imagination to evoke persons and places associated with English literature. Particularly vivid are his studies of "The Milton Country," "Swift at Letcombe," "Thomas Hardy and Max Gate," and "D. H. Lawrence at Eastwood."

MILTON AND THE LITERATURE OF TRAVEL. By ROBERT RALSTON CAWLEY. Princeton University Press. Pp. 158. \$3.00.

Essentially a study in genesis and poetic composition. During his "reading period" at Horton, and later, Milton perused with great relish the travel literature which was the natural product of the age of exploration and discovery in which he lived. Mr. Cawley discusses how Milton used his poetic imagination on the materials available to him. He finds that the travel books which Milton seems to have consulted most frequently were the works of Heylyn, Sandys, Fuller, and Purchas. Much of his discussion is related to *Paradise Lost*, which, he finds, for a work basically classical and biblical, contains an extraordinary amount of geographical material of the new kind.

POEMS OF MR. JOHN MILTON. The 1645 Edition with Essays in Analysis by CLEANTH BROOKS and JOHN EDWARD HARDY. Harcourt. Pp. 353. \$3.75.

The 1645 edition of the shorter poems contains those which Milton himself chose to print. Brooks and Hardy retain all the English poems, and also those in Italian, for which Pier Pasinetti has provided prose translations especially for this volume. The Latin and Greek poems are omitted. The first section of the book contains the texts of the poems with very brief introductory notes; the second section, essays in analysis, which are full critical explications of the poems. Appendixes include an analytical essay on Milton's early career as a poet, the texts of the short poems in the 1673 edition, and a glossary.

STUDIES IN MILTON. By E. M. W. TILLYARD. Macmillan. Pp. 176. \$2.50.

Ten essays by a noted Milton scholar in which he presents his present thinking about several knotty problems. The two major studies concern a new interpretation of the ninth and tenth books of *Paradise Lost* and a conjecture as to what portions of Milton's theology passed most readily into his poetry. Tillyard's new theory as to the point of climax in *Paradise Lost* is challenging and controversial. He blasts the old heresy that Satan is the hero and advances the idea that "the chief point of the crisis is the delusion of Satan and the ironic defeat of his apparently gigantic efforts by the small decencies of the human pair."

DAILY LIVING IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY. By URBAN TIGNER HOLMES, JR. University of Wisconsin Press.

The author, who teaches at the University of North Carolina, says this book has come from his heart—the product of thirty years' study, teaching, and travel. It concentrates on the fifty years from 1150 to 1200. It is a personal interpretation, a companion for literary studies. Accompanying (?) the author upon his travels was Alexander Neckam, a schoolmaster, born 1157. Descriptions of houses, castles, kitchens, and the what-not of daily living, as well as architecture and activities of peasant and noble. Full notes.

MELVILLE'S EARLY LIFE AND REDBURN. By WILLIAM H. GILMAN. New York University Press. Pp. 378. \$5.00.

In evaluating a novel purportedly autobiographical, it is almost impossible to determine which is fact and which is fiction without the aid of external evidence, as, for example, Somerset Maugham's *The Summing Up* in relation to *Of Human Bondage*. For years Wellingborough Redburn has been identified as Herman Melville. Mr. Gilman decided to test the validity of *Redburn* as autobiography, the better to evaluate Melville's powers as a creative artist. The result is a new study of Melville's life from 1819 to 1841, based on an exploration of both old and new sources from an objective point of view. Gilman finds a good many differences in fact between *Redburn* and Melville's early life, and in the last section of his book he completely reevaluates Melville's artistry in *Redburn*.

LESLIE STEPHEN. By NOEL GILROY ANNAN. Harvard University Press. Pp. 342. \$5.00.

This is more than a biography of an important Victorian intellectual and man of letters. It is, as its subtitle indicates, a study of Stephen's thought and character in relation to his time. For those of us who are old enough to have revered his essays in our undergraduate days, this volume will induce nostalgia; for the younger generation it will illumine the heritage of his daughter, Virginia Woolf.

Pamphlets

DANGER! THEY'RE AFTER OUR SCHOOLS. National Commission for the Defense of Democracy through Education. Pp. 14. \$2.85 per hundred. 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

A fighting document to combat the misguided or malicious criticism of schools, to prevent curtailment of honest discussion of controversial issues, and to forestall cuts in appropriations for important school services.

A DIRECTORY OF 2002 16 MM FILM LIBRARIES. (U.S. Office of Education Bulletin No. 11, 1951.) By S. REID and ANITA CARPENTER. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. Pp. 113. \$0.30.

Classified by states and cities, with notation of the size and character of each library. A must for every school which has a projector.

College Teaching Materials

CURRENT THINKING AND WRITING: SECOND SERIES. By JOSEPH M. BACHELOR, RALPH L. HENRY, and RACHEL SALISBURY. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 316. \$2.65.

A book of readings for freshman English *Series I* of which appeared in 1947. In this series only contemporary articles have been included, and the choice has been determined by the quality of the writing and the content interest for students. Two new features of the *Second Series* are a group of critical reviews of books and an analysis of a documented paper, work upon which involves much use of the library. Included also as introductory material are brief patterns for analysis, and appended are study aids in the form of questions and lists of topics for written and oral discussion.

A CENTURY OF THE ESSAY: BRITISH AND AMERICAN. Edited by DAVID DAICHES. Harcourt. Pp. 500.

Thirty-eight essays ranging from Thoreau's "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" to James Thurber's "Ivorytown, Rinsonville, Anacinburg, and Crisco Corners." Mr. Daiches has provided a reflectory introduction and has appended brief biographical notes.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD LITERATURE. By PHILO M. BUCK, JR. Assisted by HAZEL STEWART ALBERSON. 3d ed. Macmillan. Pp. 1150. \$5.75.

The general form of the earlier editions is followed, but the scope has been enlarged to include more matter from the Far East and a new division, "Some Problems Today," has been added. In the European section some new authors have been added, a few dropped. China is now included in the division on the Orient, and

some contemporary Western authors have also been added. Editorial apparatus is kept to a minimum.

DESIGNED FOR LISTENING: A SPEAKER-LISTENER WORKBOOK. By SETH A. FESSENDEN. William C. Brown (Dubuque). \$1.75.

Its subtitle is modest. In addition to its workbook feature, it is a concise teaching textbook. With elaboration by the instructor this would be all a student would need for the course, which includes a good chapter on sociodrama as well as the standard speech topics. Designed for a college introductory course in speech.

"PHOTOPLAY STUDIES": THE RIVER. Adapted by HENRY HOUK LAW. Pp. 8. \$0.15. **THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE.** Adapted by WILLIAM LEWIN. Pp. 4. \$0.10. **OLIVER TWIST.** Adapted by F. H. LAW. Pp. 6. \$0.15. **QUO VADIS.** Adapted by F. H. LAW. Pp. 16. \$0.25. Educational and Recreational Guides (1630 Springfield Ave., Maplewood, N.J.).

Heavily illustrated, well suited for promotion if the teacher approves the plays—the authors of the guides do. Greatly reduced prices on quantities if ordered for student use.

CREATIVE READING. By HELEN RAND MILLER and JOHN J. DE BOER. Graessle-Mercer Company (Seymour, Ind.). Pp. 66.

This manual for high school and junior college students offers definite help. It addresses the student directly, in language within his comprehension and with effective examples. Devoting only one brief chapter to speed, it emphasizes comprehension, selection, evaluation.

Nonfiction

ACHIEVEMENT IN AMERICAN POETRY. ("20th Century Literature in America.") By LOUISE BOGAN. Regnery. Pp. 157. \$2.50.

Miss Bogan surveys the progress of American poetry, beginning with the iconoclastic criticism of Huneker and Robinson's *Children of the Night* and ending with Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

"... the truth triumph in every modern art appears to be that of sincerity over sham, of naturalness over affectation, of a striking turn toward precision, analysis, and structure; of a wider range of conception and idea; of a deeper apprehension of meaning." She finds Eliot the most triumphant.

THE T. S. ELIOT MYTH. ROSSELL HOPE ROBBINS. Henry Schuman. Pp. 226. \$3.00.

British-born and Cambridge-trained Robbins has studied American-born expatriate Eliot's poetry and prose, and condemns much of what he finds. The emphasis is upon Eliot's opinions, which the (fair?) quotations show to be not only Anglo-Catholic but also socially, economically, and racially very "conservative." This analysis is unfriendly and polemic but too careful to be dismissed as negligible.

CONFUCIUS: THE GREAT DIGEST AND THE UNWOBBLING PIVOT. Translation and Commentary by EZRA POUND. New Directions. Pp. 188. \$3.50.

The Stone-Classics text in ideograms of the ninth century and the translation are printed on facing pages. The tone is admirable, though the expression is prolix and repetitious. The counsels of honor and kindness ring strangely in a world of Mao-Tse Tung, Stalin, Franco, and Perón.

NELL GWYN: ROYAL MISTRESS. By JOHN HAROLD WILSON. Pellegrini & Cudahy. \$4.00.

The author, a professor of English at the Ohio State University, believes that history can be both interesting and lively. He has drawn on documentary evidence to portray the "witty pretty Nell of Old Drury," the slum-born Cockney girl who became mistress (one of them) of Charles II. An interesting picture of Restoration England and a study of a remarkable woman.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: ILLUSTRATED ENGLISH SOCIAL HISTORY. Longmans. \$4.50.

Third in a four-volume illustrated series. Beautiful illustrations are reproductions of eighteenth-century originals. Four pages in color. 208 pages.

THE CONFIDENT YEARS: 1885-1915. By VAN WYCK BROOKS. Dutton. \$6.00.

"With *The Confident Years* I bring to a close the series of historical volumes that bear the general title *Makers and Finders: A History of the Writer in America, 1800-1915*. . . I have tried to define the American tradition in letters." Impressive in scope; informative, readable analysis of the influences which have con-

tributed to the outlook of the writers of the period. 625 pages.

LONDON LADIES: TRUE TALES OF THE 18TH CENTURY. By LUCY POATE STEBBINS. Columbia. \$3.00.

Six biographical sketches, including the Siddons sisters and Jane Welsh Carlyle. Mrs. Stebbins says she has chosen these six ladies because she liked them. They lived highly unconventional lives, but there is not a dull girl among them. These interpretations sparkle with life and wit. We wonder what direction their energies would take today!

MY THEATER. By ANDRÉ GIDE. Translated by JACKSON MATHEWS. Knopf. \$4.00.

The great Gide contributes five plays to this volume, *Saul*, *Bathsheba*, *Philoctetes*, *King Candaules*, *Persephone*, as well as his famous essay, "The Evolution of the Theater." Gide, like Shaw, always had much to say and set about saying it clearly if not concisely.

EMILY DICKINSON. By RICHARD CHASE. ("American Men of Letters Series.") Sloane. \$4.00.

A sensitive and sympathetic biography. It displays in its telling the gentleness and simplicity of the poet herself. Chase has not turned up any new facts, but he has retold the familiar ones in an engaging manner and in the tempo of our times as well as of Emily's.

I'M A LUCKY GUY. By FRANK GILBRETH, JR. Crowell. \$3.00.

By the co-author of *Cheaper by the Dozen*. Lucky indeed is the man who always sees the funny side of things, and lucky the writer who can tell his life-story with zeal and humor. From the day in 1929 when he left home to enter the University of Michigan, Gilbreth has been a success. He has worked as a reporter on several papers, served in World War II, and is now associate editor of the *News and Courier* in Charleston, South Carolina. A cheerful story.

CRISIS IN ENGLISH POETRY, 1880-1940. By VIVIAN DE SOLA PINTO. Hutchinson's University Library (London); Longmans (New York). Trade ed., \$2.00; text ed., \$1.60.

A well-known Cambridge professor describes the crisis as the tendency to disintegration:

separation of "polite" poetry from popular verse in colloquial diction and separation of poetic thought from poetic feeling; or, in terms he deplures, extraversion and introversion. Thomas Hardy, W. B. Yeats, and G. M. Hopkins, who seem to him the three most considerable poets of the period, approached the solution of this problem in different ways; discussion of their work fills more than half the book.

THE NECESSARY ANGEL. By WALLACE STEVENS. Knopf. Pp. 176. \$3.00.

One essay (on a Marianne Moore poem) and six addresses, previously published but not collected. Stevens offers them as a modest contribution to the theory (or definition) of poetry. The treatment is necessarily abstract, with occasional quotable passages.

THE MELVILLE LOG: A DOCUMENTARY LIFE OF HERMAN MELVILLE. Edited by JAY LEYDA. Harcourt. 2 vols. Boxed. Pp. xxxiv+899+15 Pls. \$12.50.

A chronological compilation of all the quotations from public records, personal correspondence, and Melville's writings which seem to throw light upon the events and acts of his life or his thinking. This not only makes authentic information conveniently available but brings together some items whose significance had not been apparent before. Interpretation is left to others or another time. More interesting casual reading than might be expected.

tation is left to others or another time. More interesting casual reading than might be expected.

HERMAN MELVILLE: A BIOGRAPHY. By LEON HOWARD. University of California Press. Pp. 354. \$5.00.

Leon Howard, author of this book, and Jay Leyda, of the *Melville Log*, corresponded freely as they worked and shared new discoveries. Howard's book is selective and offers a flowing story of an interesting life. It lacks the dull spots and the interesting quotations of the *Log* and may be read in much less time. Both seem likely to prove definitive.

BACK TO MANDALAY. By LOWELL THOMAS. Greystone Press. \$3.50.

Based upon General Wingate's invasion and conquest of Burma. Invasions of Ethiopia, Japan, Palestine, and Mandalay are more fascinating than fiction. History made real. Photographs and cartoons.

1952 INFORMATION PLEASE ALMANAC. Edited by JOHN KIERAN. Macmillan. \$1.00.

The sixth edition since 1947, it boasts a crossword puzzle guide for that hard-to-find word. It is a handy book for anyone who argues and for all who teach.

Fiction, Poetry, Drama

THE POEMS OF MALLARMÉ. With the Translations of ROGER FRY and Commentaries by CHARLES MAURON. ("New Classics Series.") New Directions. Pp. 312. \$2.00.

THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF HENRI MICHAUX. Translated with an Introduction by RICHARD ELLMAN. New Directions. Pp. 297. \$3.50.

THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF PAUL ELUARD. Translated by LLOYD ALEXANDER. New Directions. Pp. 218. \$3.50.

THE MASTER OF SANTIAGO AND FOUR OTHER PLAYS. By HENRY DE MONTERLANT. Alfred A. Knopf. Pp. 339. \$3.95.

These four volumes taken together provide a good introduction to contemporary French literature. Mallarmé, the great nineteenth-century

French Symbolist poet, of course, is long since dead, but because his works are the wellspring of much contemporary poetry, English and American, as well as French, his *Poésie* is a natural starting point. This well-printed volume contains all sixty-four of the poems in French, with twenty-nine of them in the excellent English translation of Roger Fry. Mauron's commentaries are also in English. Henri Michaux, a Belgian who now lives in Paris, André Gide considered one of the most original and remarkable of contemporary poets. This new volume is a selection from eight of his books of prose poems, sketches, and *vers libre* published between 1927 and 1948. The original French texts are printed opposite the translations. Michaux's writings are frequently so fantastic as to give to the English reader, at least, the feeling that Michaux is

a Lemuel Gulliver who somewhere in the course of his travels has come upon Kafka's castle. On the other hand, the poetry of Paul Eluard seems to belong to the world we know. He is perhaps the greatest and best known of France's contemporary poets and has published almost fifty volumes of poetry, from the wide range of which the selections in this volume have been made. Henry de Montherlant is equally well known as one of France's most gifted dramatists and novelists. In this new volume, for the first time, five of his most successful and important plays have been translated into English.

SELECTED POEMS. By ROBERT FARREN.
Sheed & Ward. Pp. 180. \$2.50.

Farren is a contemporary Irish poet who has here made his own selections from his four previously published volumes of verse. He is definitely a product of the new Ireland, a man who knows both Gaelic and English and, though writing in English, is intimately conscious of his Gaelic heritage. He is well known in his own country as a poet, as a director of the Abbey Theatre, and as program director of Radio Eireann.

THE DARK MOMENT. By ANN BRIDGE.
Macmillan. \$3.75.

Turkey after World War I is the background of the story. On the jacket are personal notes of the author. She made a trip to Turkey and spent some time visiting scenes, places, and people to insure that her details should be exact. Turkey was at war with Greece. Many leading Turks were seriously trying to enlighten the Turkish people. Said one man, "It is not an easy job to turn a primitive oriental nation into a twentieth-century one." The friendship between an English girl and the wife of a Turkish official is very interesting. A bit long but very good. Literary Guild selection for January.

THE CATHERINE WHEEL. By JEAN STAFFORD.
Harcourt. \$3.00.

As the story opens, Katherine Congreve is entertaining as usual for the summer the three children of her old girl-friend cousin and the man in whom she has more than a passing interest. The plot is of less importance than the subtlety and compassion of expression. The study of a young boy's mind is particularly provocative. An unusual book.

CHOSEN COUNTRY. By JOHN DOS PASSOS.
Houghton. \$4.00.

The setting is Chicago of World War I days. Basically a love story with no special social significance, although the heroine is warm-hearted and impulsive. There are back flashes of the lives of parents and grandparents.

SPARK OF LIFE. By ERICH REMARQUE.
Appleton. \$3.75.

By the author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The author states that his book is not a report on a specific concentration camp; it is based upon facts, eye-witness accounts, documents, etc., and other camps like it really existed. Its picture of horror and cruelty is hard to believe, yet we do believe. His chief purpose is to show the "survival of the human spirit" when the body is subjected to anguish and tyranny. A bitter book but courageous and hopeful.

THE SEASONS' DIFFERENCE. By FRED-ERICK BUECHNER. Knopf. \$3.50.

The twenty-five-year-old author of *A Long Day's Dying* is a member of the faculty of Lawrenceville School. The plot is not important but the characters and style are unusual. A member of a summer colony has a vision, a supernatural visitation. He is at the time tutoring some precocious children. When he tries to share his experience and recall the vision for the group, the effect upon children and adults is not what he had hoped.

WINDS OF MORNING. By H. L. DAVIS.
Morrow. \$3.50.

By the author of *Honey in the Horn*. The background is the Columbia River section in the 1920's. It largely concerns the friendship between a young outsider, a sheriff's assistant, who tells the story, and an old horse herder who has known the country well when it was young and does not always welcome the change. Colorful, violent, earthy. January Book-of-the-Month-Club selection.

SOME OTHERS AND MYSELF: SEVEN STORIES AND A MEMOIR. By RUTH SUCKOW. Rinehart. \$3.00.

Perceptive stories about ordinary people. The memoir throws light upon Miss Suckow's

life and experiences from which she has drawn for her writings. This will prove nostalgic reading for many readers. The dramas are modest, characters sane. Most are even pleasant!

THE GREATEST SPORT STORIES FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES: SPORT CLASSICS OF A CENTURY. Edited by ALLISON DANZIG and PETER BRANDWEIN. A. S. Barnes. \$4.95.

Eyewitness accounts of sporting events of the last hundred years just as they were printed the morning after in the *New York Times*. "As covered on the spot—at ringside, in the press box—by sports reporters." The first story is "The First America Cup Race." Most pieces are short. A few pictures. 680 pages.

FABLES AND PARABLES. By NYM WALES. Philosophical Library. \$4.75.

In the Foreword the author says that in our atomic age the writer turns to symbols and analogy. "The fable and parable can say more than the essay." He believes this period of transition should encourage us to write and collect the folklore of capitalism. Symbolism, he says, is a universal language, and the parable and allegory transcend the limits of change. Therefore this book of fables and parables for the midcentury, a half-page to two pages each, many of them effective.

POEMS OF THE OLD WEST. Selected and edited by LEVETTE J. DAVIDSON. University of Denver Press. Pp. 239. \$3.50.

Rocky Mountain poems under these headings: "The Lure of Gold," "Cowboys and Cattle," "Indians, Scouts, and Soldiers," "Frontier Doings," and "The Great Outdoors." Not great poetry but possible verse revealing the thoughts and feelings of the pioneers. Worth while.

ANGEL IN THE PAWNSHOP. By A. B. SHIFFRIN. **BELL, BOOK, AND CANDLE.** By JOHN VAN DRUTEN. **SECOND THRESHOLD.** By PHILIP BARRY. Revised by ROBERT E. SHERWOOD. Acting edition. Dramatists Play Service. \$0.85 each.

THE WORLDLY MUSE. Edited by A. J. M. SMITH. Abelard Press. \$3.50.

While presenting nearly all the exalted poets of English literature, Editor Smith has steered clear of the more profound works, keeping to

the standards he sets up with Matthew Prior's quotation, "Let us e'en talk a little like folks of this world." An anthology of serious light verse.

SIDDHARTHA. By HERMANN HESSE. Translated by HILDA ROSSNER. New Directions. Pp. 111. \$1.50.

The name is often given to Buddha. Hesse, a Swiss, writes a novel as a spiritual explorer and sets it against an Asiatic religion. One of the few works of the 1946 Nobel Prize winner available in English.

MURIEL RUKEYSER: SELECTED POEMS. New Directions. \$1.50.

If read for meaning rather than mood, these seventy-odd poems will leave the general sensual connotations associated with their most frequently used words, "bandages" and "nakedness."

TENDER IS THE NIGHT. By F. SCOTT FITZGERALD. Rev. ed. Scribner. \$3.50.

Fitzgerald is said to have been dissatisfied with this novel. After his death this rearranged and partly rewritten version was found—"the final version of the book as I would like it."

Reprints

DEATH OF A SALESMAN. By ARTHUR MILLER. Bantam Books. \$0.25.

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN. By FRANK B. GILBRETH, JR., and ERNESTINE GILBRETH CAREY. Bantam Books. \$0.25.

HONEY IN THE HORN. By H. L. DAVIS. (Cardinal ed.) Pocket Books. \$0.35.

THREE PLAYS: THE CHERRY ORCHARD, THREE SISTERS, IVANOV. By ANTON CHEKHOV. Translation by ELISAVETA FEN. Penguin Classics. \$0.65.

THE PAST RECAPTURED. By MARCEL PROUST. ("Modern Library.") Random House. \$1.25.

THE SHORT STORIES OF SAKI. By H. H. MUNRO. ("Modern Library.") Random House. \$1.25.

Introduction by Christopher Morley, who says: "There is no greater compliment to be paid the right kind of friend than to hand him Saki without comment."

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